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**Unpacking the effects of power relations in childhood sexuality:
A discursive analysis based on conversations
with parents, teachers and counsellors**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of

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Abstract

This research focusses on language used by adults within Aotearoa New Zealand who are significant in children's lives, exploring cultural and societal discourses on childhood sexuality. Seventeen individual and three group interviews were conducted involving thirteen parents and nine teachers from two schools, and six therapists from one counselling agency. The participants were consulted on a series of six vignettes which were developed from clinical examples of children's experiences. These vignettes were presented verbally to the participants. Ethical approval to interview children was granted, but parents did not consent to their involvement. The focus therefore turned to adults and the transcripts from these interviews provided the material for a discursive analysis of text and language based on the interview conversations. Utilising poststructuralist and feminist analysis of discourse as language and practices of power/knowledge, strategies were located in which children's sexual subjectivities are governed through adults' talk. This speaking produces gendered and sexed child subjects within dominant discourses of compulsory heterosexuality and normative biological and psychological development. Adults' own sexual subjectivities also appeared to be regulated by these same practices, influencing the ways it was possible to talk about sexuality in childhood. Parents' talk indicated care and initial intention to teach the child about sex and sexuality, but there was uncertainty about how and when, and fear about losing the initiative when a child accessed information from others, such as peers at school or from the internet. Through this talk, parents were constructed as 'judges of normality', guarding innocence and the heteronormative gender binary. Teachers' talk reflected on changes in children's awareness of themselves and others, and spoke of diversity in children's

experiences about sexuality and gender. However, regulated through policy as teachers in their relating to children about sex and sexuality, their talk was cautious. The analysis of interviews with counsellors focussed on the silences in society around talking about gendered norms of male sexuality and sexual behaviour. I found that there were instances where ideas stood in contrast to dominant positions within discourses. While most parents' talk expressed a desire to be truthful with children's inquiry and curiosity about sex and sexuality, few parents responded more openly and fully with that information. Overall, I found that the sites of talk about child sexuality were generally populated by women/mothers, and that men/fathers are frequently absent and/or silent in these discussions. The analysis suggested that, within an environment of uncertainty, information is hidden from children, and adults struggle to find public and professional spaces that are available and safe to engage in discussion with other adults about children and sexuality. Confusion and uncertainty characterised adults' concerns about their responsibilities for deciding when, what and how much information to share with children about sex and sexuality.

Dedicated to

Terence M. Flanagan 1920-2016

My loving father

and

Theres J. Hermann 1929-2010

My dear mother-in-law

And in memory of other family members

who passed on during this project

Jeanie Hebbend 1926-2012

Terry Farrelly 1945-2018

Patrick Turney 1945-2018

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Prologue

A Personal Reflection

This Prologue presents a background to my interest and commitment to researching the topic of children's sexuality. My voice in this prologue draws on counselling experience as I reflect on professional practice of counselling and the questions that arose for me about political effects for children and families. This voice stands in contrast to that of more discursive scholarship that speaks in this thesis from Chapter 1 onwards.

Some background...

In this prologue, I tell my personal and professional story which sets the scene for this research. I write, not simply as a researcher, but as a male, a heterosexual partner, a father-parent, a counsellor, and also (among other identities) a counsellor educator. Through telling something of the background of my professional and personal interest in researching sexuality in childhood, I make available some awareness about the initial context where the desire emerged for me to commit to this project.

I first outline my curiosity in studying childhood sexuality. I explain my interest in the topic of children and sexuality and introduce a history of my counselling practice. This presents the social and cultural milieu into which I ventured, including some questions that are asked of men who work with children. Specific approaches to counselling and to understanding childhood and sexuality have shaped my curiosity and interest, as well as concerns. These are brought

forward in order to address specific concerns about children labelled as ‘sexualised’.

A professional interest in children and sexuality

The origin of this study stems from my practice as a counsellor in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Employed by Child Youth & Family (the Aotearoa New Zealand statutory child protection agency, now Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children), and then with Parentline (a non-governmental organisation, community-based, child advocacy agency), I was asked to work with children exhibiting ‘sexualised behaviour’. Social workers in each agency were concerned about an increase in referrals related to children engaging in sexual play, but also in actions that were alarming teachers and parents. Some of these actions were reported by the media as harmful to other children (see these newspaper articles for example, “Five-Year-Olds Sexually Abusing”, 2005; “Surge In Sexual Abuse By Children”, 2002). The social workers wanted me to develop a therapeutic programme for these children. My initial response included a mix of hesitancy, some anxiety and fear, but also curiosity.

I do not recall whether this increase in referral numbers was analysed in any particular way, and now wonder about questions that could have been asked. Were the number of notifications higher than in previous years or was the approach to responding to them different? Was the behaviour the same but more concern was then being raised? If so, what had shifted in understanding about children’s sexual behaviour? Had specific behaviours of children become more pronounced, or was the change in the ways that these behaviours were perceived? What lay behind the thinking of referring this ‘problem’ to me, ‘the counsellor’?

Was I seen as the therapeutic fix who would regulate how children should behave, and thereby also regulate the practices of parenting? The children referred were all boys. Was this a boys' problem? And if so, was I 'more suitable' as a male to work with them? Was there a sense that, as a male, I could be (more) effective in working with these boys than the largely female-dominated social work teams? What understanding was there about boys' sexual/ised actions compared to girls?

I was initially hesitant to approach this area of practice. My experience as a counsellor and a parent at the time was limited. I had experience of counselling with young adolescent men around sexuality and ideas of masculinity, and group therapy with men who were referred because of sexual offending, but for me working with children was new, a departure from my usual practice. My partner and I were parents with young boys. I was learning a number of things about relationships and families with young children – as a (sexual) partner and a (gendered) parent. Together we were learning parenting, and how to respond to our children's ways of relating together and with peers. These ways of relating, including their 'antics' around nudity and exhibitionism when dressing, bathing and having fun in the summer outside, were not new to us. We each had nieces and nephews we cared for and had seen similar displays in our wider family circle. Yet there were questions for us as new/ish parents about 'how far to let these antics go'. We had each experienced a moderately conservative upbringing as children, and reflected on our hopes for a more open and communicative approach with our children, especially around sexuality. I thought I had little expertise to offer, and at the time I questioned my ability as a counsellor for this work, as well as questioning whether the struggles of parenting offered useful experience or introduced doubt into my professional counselling practice. As a

male, I was also aware that my values and ideas of children's actions might draw some unwarranted attention, such as: "he's a guy legitimising kids' sex play!"

Gender is always present

I felt some discomfort about the social workers' request mentioned above. Was this an aspect of counselling that I wanted to explore, given the dominant attitudes in Aotearoa New Zealand society at the time about men working with children? There had been a number of high profile national and local stories about men in trusted and responsible positions abusing children. Two influential cases that had resulted in court appearances included the controversial 1992 Christchurch Civic Crèche case, where Peter Ellis was convicted of sexually abusing children, and the 1997 Hamilton primary school case where teacher John Edgar was acquitted of seven charges of indecent assault. Both men were gay, an identification that pervaded the police investigation, media reporting and influenced public opinion (Herkt & Whiteside, 2003; Thompson, 1998). These stories, in particular, had generated a societal questioning in New Zealand about men's involvement with children in education contexts. During the investigations both Ellis and Edgar had warned that men should consider not teaching young children. While not a teacher, I was aware that decreasing numbers of men were involved with children in early childhood (see Russell, 2013) and primary education (see Cordy, 2017; Davis & Hay, 2018). One of my male friends left after a few years teaching. He said that he had experienced occasions where words and actions were misinterpreted, making him feel vulnerable. Furthermore, my own history might have been cause for suspicion, since I had been a Catholic priest in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Contributing to this anxiety and fear for me was the growing

number of accounts of child sexual abuse by Catholic priests. The conviction of a priest colleague from Hamilton in 1990 for sexual abuse of boys also contributed to my hesitancy. How might my own past be viewed in relation to this work?

I had experienced my own sexuality as under the microscope of others' perceptions and opinions. While at Parentline I was asked to co-facilitate a parents' and children's programme on keeping safe – during which one mother commented to my co-worker, "Is Paul gay? I think he is!" Although I was confident about my own sexuality, I did experience this questioning as unsettling and introducing a twinge of vulnerability within the moment. I considered the perceptions noted earlier of gay men working with young children: that young children are at risk of sexual abuse when in the care of gay men. My sense was one of being monitored by this mother more closely.

Yet, despite some uncertainty I was drawn to this work. I was curious about the potential for learning as a professional counsellor: around parenting, relationships, understandings of masculinity, and of sexuality in childhood. This work also offered me opportunities for new learning as a parent. My curiosity extended into ideas of supporting parents and caregivers, social workers and teachers in the questions and frustrations they subsequently shared.

What counselling might offer children

Counselling is a distinct profession that differs from social work and psychology. Its focus is not to empower families by provision of social services, nor is it to assess and identify particular mental or relational diagnoses. It does, however, offer a place for particular conversations that "[invite] and [enable] people to take up various positions with themselves, others, ideas and the world around them"

(University of Waikato, 2018, p. 1). In particular, counselling for children can “contribute to building communities for children that value their skills, knowledges, beliefs, abilities and preferences” (Morgan, 2006, p. iv).

In the next sections I describe the approach to counselling in my practice, other sources that informed practice with children and sexual behaviour concerns, and putting a spotlight on power relations within this professional practice. My practice was largely within settings that favoured a psychological approach to problems. Before expanding on some of the psychological approaches that were used in this work, I now turn to describing specific approaches to counselling that have informed my own practice, and how these ideas have been instrumental in the formation of the approach I have taken to the research topic.

Narrative approaches to counselling

In the mid-1990s, I began postgraduate study in counselling at the University of Waikato. The counsellor education programme focussed on narrative approaches to therapy based on the work of White and Epston (1989, 1990). White and Epston drew from a range of sources in anthropology and linguistics to develop their approach. The programme at Waikato further introduced students to postmodern ideas that questioned the dominance of modernist knowledge, to social constructionist theorising of knowledge, and to poststructuralist critiques of power and knowledge (Monk, Winslade, Crocket & Epston, 1997).

I developed conceptual and practice skills to question the use of language: to interrogate taken for granted ideas about the meaning of a story or how an action might be interpreted and to use these skills to enquire further about other possible implications. Through the programme, I was encouraged to explore ways

of speaking that used externalising language so to begin the task of separating the identity of ‘the problem’ from the identity of ‘the child, and/or their parents’ (see White, 2007; White & Epston, 1990). I realised that I could question whose knowledge might be being privileged within any story, such as in a school record, an agency referral, or psychological/social worker report. I could ask the question, what other lines of discussion or storylines were being minimised, ignored or erased? In the light of this approach to counselling, I questioned some of the directions taken within the work with boys in my practice settings.

What other ideas informed my practice?

My clinical reading at the time, in this practice area, was literature from psychological (Johnson, 2002a; Pithers, Gray, Cunningham & Lane, 1993; Ryan, 2000a) and psychiatric/bio-medical approaches (e.g., Friedrich, Fisher, Broughton et al., 1998; Friedrich, Fisher, Dittner et al., 2001; Shaw, 1999). Conversations with therapist colleagues included prevailing ideas of ‘treatment’ or therapy that favoured programmes involving psychometric assessment (Gil & Johnson, 1993) and behavioural therapies (Burton, Rasmussen, Bradshaw et al., 1998; Cunningham & MacFarlane, 1991; Johnson, 2002b). These readings and conversations did not sit comfortably with me. My approach to counselling was based on the idea that people and problems were located within and are shaped by systems of cultural and political language. Therapy was therefore a process to help people understand their position in a specific context, and explore possible pathways for understanding their experience and developing new meanings that shifted their positioning.

From listening to boys tell their stories, and sensing tension and contradiction between their accounts and those of adults in authority (whether teachers, parents or psychologists/social workers/counsellors), I had often found myself taking up an advocacy position on the child's behalf. This was not easy. My employment could suggest that I was there to coach or train these boys into pro-social ways of behaving, that my role was to support the other adults and their ideas of what events had occurred, and implement any change necessary for the boys. I found this position difficult, and devised ways to draw upon my theoretical approach in counselling that understood people and problems as located within social and cultural contexts rather than problems to 'be fixed'. This involved listening to children's stories when they were otherwise dismissed, questioning the taken-for-granted ideas held in their narratives, exploring with them different ways to understand their experience, and to include the child's own specific knowledge about events when they stood in contrast to adults' stories.

I was also required to write reports about this work with boys. These reports would become part of an official file and contribute to a narrative that supposedly told the 'truth' about these boys. I was expected to shape these reports in the customary dispassionate and distanced third person format, a usual practice for a clinical specialist. In my own writing, I tried to prioritise the inclusion of the boys' stories, outlining *their* telling of the events and the meanings *they* gave to them. At times, my writing was 'corrected' and I was encouraged to position myself as an expert on this child. I was not comfortable being positioned this way, as if I was judging these boys, and possibly their families. Having become a father myself, these issues mattered at a personal as well as a professional level. I worked hard to provide documents that satisfied the clinical requirements of the

job, but I also worked to present information that offered a broader attempt at storying the young person. I was concerned about how defining these reports could potentially be for a child at that time, but also how these reports might define their future. These tensions prompted aspects of my interest in wanting to examine this thesis topic, and pay particular attention to power relations in counselling children where the focus was on issues of sexuality.

Narratives of children's sexual and gendered lives

As part of counselling conversations prior to this study, children would sometimes tell me about a range of possible meanings for their sexual activity with other children (see Flanagan, 2010). Listening to these stories I became aware of children's own perspectives on the actions they had been a part of. That might include comments that suggest that play was at the heart of the action, or that the action had included an exciting discovery, a possible intention to hurt, or that a traumatic encounter had taken place. I wrote a number of articles, particularly reflecting on children's settings within schools (Flanagan, 2009, 2011). At the same time, I heard parents express a range of questions (see Flanagan, 2003; Flanagan & Lamusse, 2000). Was there anything to worry about? Where might their child have learned this behaviour? Was their son gay? Some were fearful that their child had experienced abuse. Might their child be/become a 'sex offender'? What seemed to be common within the perspectives of both children and adults was a level of uncertainty about who to trust with questions about the issue, and who to have conversations with (see Flanagan, 2009). A limitation in this study was the absence of children as participants, since no parents would consent to

their involvement even though the ethics committee had approved such participation.

Harmful effects of some ideas/practices on children

One particular concern for me was the potential for harm to children. I knew of some instances of individual children experiencing stigma and isolation through the naming and judgements of actions as ‘sexual(ised)’ by school staff and social service professionals, and also by caregivers. One boy I met with, while working at Child Youth & Family, was about 13 years old, and had been placed in care. He would meet me with his foster carers. Counselling, to these carers, was an opportunity to report on him and his behaviour. On one occasion, the carers described him as rude, filthy, and dirty, saying that they did not want him in their home and with their family any longer. The boy had come to breakfast when called that morning, fully clothed, but clearly showing through his shorts that he had an erection. To them, a married couple with children of their own attending school, the erection signified the boy had been thinking sexual thoughts and probably wanted to masturbate. In S. Jackson and Scott’s (2007) words, “an erect penis is conventionally read as an unproblematic signifier of male desire, but it may not have such meaning to the man experiencing it” (p. 101). Masturbation was also not acceptable to these caregivers. The boy and I talked about erections, and how our bodies can respond in moments quite unexpectedly, as well as intended responses. I asked about how clothing might ‘cover’ us, as males, when erections occur, particularly when we do not expect or want them. I learned that the boy only had boxer shorts as underwear, which did not seem sufficient ‘support’ on this occasion. My subsequent conversation with his carers received

little hearing. I hoped that a simple change of underwear style might help, along with opportunity to engage in discussion about boys growing through puberty. Nevertheless, they maintained their understanding of his ‘behaviour’ as inappropriate and lewd. I was then judged by the carers for questioning their truth, and believing a ‘dangerous’ young man.

Additional concerns were raised for me as, over time, some schools and families became targets for media-fuelled ‘panic’ stories. These included stories of children’s sex play and occasions of ‘sexual’ activity by children towards other children, including some that could be harmful. A number of newspaper articles reported on these events (see “Five-Year-Olds Behaving Sexually”, 2000; “Five-Year-Olds Sexually Abusing”, 2005; Flanagan, 2013; “Sex Among School Kids Increasing”, 2002; “Surge In Sexual Abuse By Children”, 2002). More recently, panics have been described within media articles on “sex case(s)” in schools (see Kerr, 2014a, 2014b), about parents kissing their children (Beeston, 2016; Miller, 2017; Packham, 2016) or bathing with their children (Gamble, 2016; Tate, 2017), and about parents not encouraging children to hug or kiss adults (“New Zealand Child Sexual Abuse Charity”, 2016). Readers’ comments that followed these reports offered a rich array of opinions ranging from complete opposition to full support of the ideas in the articles. I noticed that these comments often included dominant ideas from psychological and developmental theories on childhood and contributed to a sense that there are right or appropriate knowledges about children and their behaviour. It was from these and other reflections noted above that I considered this research was necessary at this time, and how I was placed to engage in this study.

The importance of this research

This project is driven by my personal curiosity, initially as a parent and a counsellor, but now as an academic researcher in trying to understand more fully what lies within the concept of ‘childhood sexuality’. My experience as a counsellor, itself informed by the narrative approaches offered in my postgraduate degree programme, has enabled me to position my curiosity as intentionally questioning of the effects of language in the constitution of ‘childhood sexuality’. My curiosity connects with my ongoing engagement with professional communities of practice: teachers, resource teachers, social workers, psychologists and counsellors. Lastly, it intersects with my professional and academic interest in the role of gender in this area, particularly as a teacher in counsellor education.

This personal narrative presents a backdrop to my engagement with this socially and culturally sensitive research area. In it, a variety of lines of narrative intersect – my own, the families I worked with and the school personnel who have consulted me as a counsellor, the community of professionals working within Aotearoa New Zealand with children and concerning sexualised behaviour and more recently, the wider international academic community. It is a fascinating story that has held my attention for the past ten years as I teach in counsellor education at the University of Waikato, as well as writing and publishing as an academic engaging part-time on this thesis.

Chapter 1

Introducing the discursive project

The Prologue presented a personal introduction to my practice as a counsellor and teacher, and provided the origin for my research interest. This initial chapter introduces the thesis as a discursive project. It explores specific ethical questions around power relations that underpin counselling and the theoretical approach to this research: questions on language, knowledge, and regulating practices of counselling. My involvement in research and writing about child sexuality is presented in educational and social practice contexts. By including these professional counselling and research stories, it is argued that this research project is necessary and timely. Furthermore, this research could be of relevance for both New Zealand and international contexts for its contribution to research on child sexuality, and the ongoing question about the place of men working in child-centred practices of education and research.

Power relations in counselling: Regulating social practice

Researchers writing internationally (e.g., Cushman, 1990; Furedi, 2003; Kaye, 1999; Lerner, 1999; Rose, 1990; Sinclair & Monk, 2005) and from New Zealand (e.g., K. Crocket, 2012; Waldegrave, 1985; Waldegrave, Tamasese, Tuhaka, & Campbell, 2003) have considered power relations in counselling. Aligned with psychological and psychotherapeutic systems of understanding the human person, earlier humanistic approaches to counselling practice assumed universalistic views of a person as a fully functioning, independent and autonomous human

being (Gergen, 1991; Monk et al., 1997). Contained in this view, the ‘self’ is seen as developing independently, engaged in a process of self-actualisation according to pre-determined developmental pathways, rather than developing in-relation to surrounding social relationships. The individual was the locus for solving problems, as any cause for a problem was seen as internalised by professionals and by the person.

‘Treatment’ approaches within this view are developed within cognitive and behavioural approaches, but could also be included within psychodynamic and ‘romantic’ approaches (Gergen, 1991). This view also positions the therapist as an autonomous agent: the expert with the knowledge of what is to be considered developmentally appropriate. Expectations for both therapist and client were based on compliance and conforming to the dominant ideas and practices around therapy of the day. Any client who did not respond could be identified as resistant or non-compliant, and possibly face punitive consequences.

More recently narrative therapy, and other postmodern approaches, have enabled the development of a critical stance to the pre-eminence of the idea of universally applied developmental norms noted above. This approach considers social and cultural constructions of oppression, such as gender, race, ability and sexuality. In New Zealand, postmodern therapies, particularly narrative therapy, have worked within frameworks to acknowledge people as experts on their own lives, and to explore the subjugated local knowledges they bring to the counselling encounter. Application of professional knowledges in this view includes an ethical responsibility to emphasise the responsibility of care for how professional knowledges are used and their effects for clients’ lives (see A. Crocket, 2012; K. Crocket et al, 2017; Durie, 1999; Swann, Swann, & Crocket,

2013; Waldegrave et al., 2003). In such therapies, a deconstructive process is involved, which includes exposing practices that locate problems within social and cultural discourses and analysing language that constructs and sustains oppressive practices. A collaborative construction of new identity development is sought, drawing upon people's own knowledges to shape sustainable preferred identity narratives which are also subject to an analysis of discourse. Through attention to prioritising relational practices of power within the counselling context, there is an intentional shift towards valuing a client's experience and how they might story what is significant in their lives. In approaching the topic of children's sexuality in such practice, there is a commitment to the inclusion of significant adults involved in children's lives: those who hold particular personal knowledge. Such adults contribute in the exploration of social, gendered and raced contexts within which these narratives emerge. Their knowledge is a relevant and valuable contribution to this research. In planning the present research, the knowledge of such adults was seen as a relevant and valuable potential source of knowledge.

Dialogue with professional and research communities

This section includes a brief overview of published work that indicates my efforts to engage in dialogue with professional and research communities in what is still a very sensitive area of counselling and educational practice. This section ends with an outline of the thesis chapters.

Prior to joining the university, and as my work progressed with the boys at the statutory child protection agency, Child Youth & Family, a programme was developed for individual, family and group work. A practice article was written

for publication in the agency's New Zealand-based practice journal, *Social Work Now* (Flanagan & Lamusse, 2000). Identifying that social workers and caregivers were also requesting support for information, a team offered workshops around child sexuality. This was published in *Social Work Now* (Flanagan, 2003). Following my shift to *Parentline*, the programme was developed further (Boyes, 2004). Later I wrote a reflexive piece on this work in *Explorations*, an online Australian narrative practice journal (Flanagan, 2010). As I moved into planning my doctoral research, I explored gender and power in practice in *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research*, a practitioners' journal that focusses on the links between research and practice (Flanagan, 2014a).

I wrote several papers in order to extend the conversation related to children's sexuality and gender in school contexts. I carried out a survey of primary school principals (Flanagan, 2001) with results published in *Set*, a New Zealand journal on teaching and learning for school teachers (Flanagan, 2009). A further paper in the *Waikato Journal of Education* (Flanagan, 2011) critically reflected on examples using theoretical notions of discourse and positioning. An article in *Open Review of Educational Research* (Flanagan, 2014b) unpacked ideas shared by teachers and parents in interview material gathered for this thesis. A research methods case study (Flanagan, 2017) discussed the use of vignettes within this kind of research. I also wrote commentary about ethical review and reflexivity in *Sex Education* (Flanagan, 2012) and a chapter that questioned rigid understandings of sexuality in childhood (Flanagan, 2013). Through teaching and research, and interactions with academic colleagues and students, I continued to develop a reflexive position in relation to gender as always present in human interaction (see Gaddis, Kotzé, & Crocket, 2007). Another book chapter explored

my own negotiation with/of gender within a range of contexts (Flanagan, 2015) and my questions about how to position myself in this discursive research project.

This above-mentioned publications indicate my commitment to exploring sexuality and gender in children's lives through dialogue, since these writings were directed towards practice contexts in education and counselling, where it is sometimes difficult to question gender and normative heterosexuality. These explorations helped to refine the boundaries for this doctoral research project.

Researching in a period of flux

In the Prologue, I attempted to show ways that my experience has positioned me to engage in this research in a fruitful way, as someone who has practiced in counselling and in research, and in doing so connected with a diversity of practitioners and researchers. This thesis is written within a time of changing and developing theory in qualitative research. As St. Pierre (2013) remarks, "The posts continue" (p. 646). 'Posts' include post-positivism (Lather, 1991), post-humanism (Barad, 2012), post-postmodernism (see Braidotti, 2005), post-qualitative research (St. Pierre, 2011), an age of new materialisms (Barad, 2012) and post-qualitative inquiry (Kuby, Aguayo, Holloway et al., 2016; Lather, 1993). This project is a post-qualitative inquiry in the sense described by St. Pierre (2013): it is not a "conventional humanist qualitative research [which] functions in both interpretive/hermeneutic and logical/positivist/empirical structures" (p. 223). Aware of these shifting 'posts' landscapes, Chapter 2 locates the study distinctly within postmodern, social constructionist and poststructuralist theory.

Research Questions

Reflecting on my personal and professional experiences in the Prologue and in this chapter, and in the light of theoretical and research knowledges to be explained in Chapters 2 to 4, I have shaped the following research questions.

- What language is used to describe child sexuality by adults (parents, teachers and counsellors) in Aotearoa New Zealand?
- What discourses about childhood and sexuality are visible within this language?
- How does this language construct specific notions of ‘the child’ and sexuality?
- How is ‘the child’ constructed as a sexual being within these discourses?
- In what ways, through language, might children be understood as sexual subjects within families and society?
- “What were the effects of power generated by what was said?” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 11)

Outline of thesis: Mapping the territories of this research

Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical approach for this research, exploring ideas of knowing and reality. These ideas inform the thoughts and actions of the interest groups who respond to instances of ‘sexualised play’ among younger children. Questions about what counts as knowledge, and how knowledge is ‘known’ are considered, and questions about what constitutes the everyday reality of being human are posed and unpacked through an introduction to concepts of postmodernism and social constructionism. The chapter then describes the conceptual framework for this research based on a poststructuralist approach. I argue that Foucault’s ideas around discourse (1969/1972), power relations (1980)

and subjectivity (1982), augmented by Derrida's (1967/1976) notion of deconstruction, and feminist poststructuralist approaches to analysing gender (for example Butler, 1990, 1993, 2011; B. Davies, 1994), offer a robust theoretical lens through which to perceive and analyse literature and other research materials regarding sexuality in childhood.

Chapters 3 and 4 then describe what discourses can produce in the areas of sexuality and childhood. With particular focus on language, its relational and constitutive effects on people, Chapter 3 explores selected theories of sexuality/gender, using Foucauldian and feminist poststructuralist ideas to identify particular key themes of normativity and queering of ideas about sexuality.

Chapter 4 examines a history of ideas and practices around childhood sexuality, particularly from the Western world (relating to the Western world and European culture¹), and how these have constructed specific discourses on gender in childhood. Significant discourses on childhood sexuality identified in the research literature are considered. Discourses on innocence and children's sexual agency and citizenship, particularly in relation to masculine-dominant heterosexuality, are highlighted. These discourses are viewed as at once historical, but also contemporary in their continuance and emergence within academic literatures and cultural texts of education, psychology and media. The research questions for this thesis emerged from this consideration of theoretical and historical precedents.

¹ O'Carroll (2018) refers to WEIRD societies (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) in his assessment of what constitutes normal child sexuality. This description sharply makes visible a distinction between societies that have historically dominated and benefitted from political and economic power. Throughout this thesis, I use the term 'Western' to generally refer to concepts and practices that historically originate from European and Christian culture and society.

Chapter 5 outlines the methodology constructed for this project. I describe my approach to the design, the methods of inquiry for this research and how this thesis was driven by ethical concerns. While the project plan to include children was approved by the ethics committee, the recruitment of children proved unattainable. Participants in this study were limited to adults. The methods of analysis for this research are then outlined. In all, 17 individual interviews and three group interviews took place. Not all participants were included in the findings chapters. Those who are not expressed ideas very similar to what other participants said. An explanation is also given for the range of methodological and interpretive ideas and practices employed to produce the analysis of findings for this thesis. Foucauldian discourse analysis is described, together with feminist poststructuralism and queer theory, as the main approach used to deconstruct the ideas and practices revealed in the findings gathered. Acknowledging layers of ethical relations within this project, I construct the researcher position taken and the participant positions offered to others throughout the process. This informed the strategies selected for collecting material for analysis. A rationale is presented for using vignettes, and why both individual and group interviews were included.

Chapters 6 to 8 engage in analysis of the research material tending to focus on three participants' interviews in particular. These chapters also include material from five other participants' interviews and one group interview. Chapter 6 draws upon Butler's theorising of gender performativity together with her political notion of discursive subjectification and performative utterance. These ideas expose words and actions by which people are conditioned towards conforming to a normative understanding of childhood (and) sexuality, for example, how children are positioned to know about sex as heteronormatively gendered.

Chapters 7 and 8 give particular attention to Foucault's thinking of governmentality and power/knowledge using a Foucauldian analysis of discourse. Chapter 7 focuses on ideas of children's knowledge of sexuality and reproduction, where a dominant discourse operates claiming that children should not know about sex as reproduction. The focus of Chapter 8 is on ideas of children's knowledge of sexuality and pleasure, where the discourse is that children should not know about sex as pleasure. Specific practices are examined for the discourses on governance and regulation of children and sexuality/gender that these material practices reveal.

In Chapter 9, I bring together the threads of analysis from the findings in the previous three chapters. I conclude the thesis with discussion on the research findings, noting how some parents try to resist dominant positionings within normative discourses of ignorant childhood about reproductive sexual knowledge and sex as pleasure. Nonetheless, I consider the possibility that most participants remain positioned within discursive practices of adult-child power relations. I regard some limitations of the project, with considerations and connections for practitioners in schools and counselling. In a time of flux, where teachers and parents face uncertainty about sexuality in childhood, identifying safe spaces for dialogue is explored. I ask what counsellors might do to reflect on their practice in support of children, and their parents and teachers. The thesis ends with potential implications for practice and possibilities for future research, such as examining how hidden discourses of childhood sexuality are made visible, and whether this could help to produce child sexuality discourses within public contexts that pay greater attention to safety concerns.

I now introduce postmodernism as the overarching “condition” (Lyotard, 1979/1984) for this research, in which social constructionist and poststructuralist theories are located and positioned.

Chapter 2

Conceptualising theory and inquiry

Introducing a conceptual framework for this thesis

This chapter presents the conceptual framework of this project and the philosophical and theoretical approaches that shape it. It draws from postmodern, social constructionist and poststructuralist ideas but also takes a specific approach to practices of knowledge construction. Poststructuralist theory is presented as the conceptual framework for this research within a broader environment of postmodernist critique of knowledge, and social constructionist critique of language.

The chapter begins with an introduction to the ideas of postmodernism because it is the overarching cultural concept for this thesis. Postmodern thinking allows for questioning of modernist claims of definitive knowledge about childhood and sexuality. It explores knowledge as multiple and varied. In particular, postmodern notions of knowledge production and knowledge construction are made visible as political and partial processes. Secondly, the influence of social constructionist philosophy is discussed. This research is located within social constructionist-inspired understandings that are critical to the role of language and discourse. Any meanings applied to childhood and sexuality are located in particular cultural and social language. Poststructuralist theory is then introduced as the conceptual framework that positions this research within specific historical and cultural discursive practices and social relations of childhood and sexuality. In particular, Foucault's genealogical analysis and

Butler's gender analysis of power relations are both proposed as suitably aligned to this research. Queer theory is then described as a further way to engage questioning normative practices in relations of power and constructions of gender.

2.1 Postmodernism: Questioning *how* knowledge is produced, what that knowledge *does*, and *whose* knowledge is (re)presented

This research is located within the 'postmodern cultural condition' (see Lather, 1991; Lyotard, 1979/1984). Within this context, postmodern thinking is used to interrogate and query modernist knowledge claims on childhood, sexuality, and childhood sexuality. To position this research as postmodern, a particular critique is made of the ideas of childhood and sexuality that are presented within particular Western, cultural and scientific frameworks. This critique questions the politics of what those frameworks produce for children and practices around sexuality.

'Postmodernism' is a twentieth century cultural movement that questions the perspectives and methods of modernism (Kvale, 1992; St. Pierre, 2013). Lyotard's (1979/1984) *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*, introduced the term postmodernism into the humanities and social sciences (O'Farrell, 2005). This movement challenged the dominance of truth claims within modernist practices of positivist scientific methodology (Lather, 1991) and disturbed the modern(ist) mentality that knowledge is universal, homogeneous, monotonous and clear (Bauman, 1991, p. 188). Irving (1999) claims, "in place of modernist certainty, postmodernism calls us to various positionings, perspectives, and creations" (p. 30). Research in the postmodern cultural condition is

postpositivist (Lather, 1991) in its refusal to take up a positivist position on ‘truth’ in methodology and analysis.

Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) note that within postmodernism, “conventional methods of knowing and telling are not automatically rejected as false or archaic. Rather, those standard methods are opened to inquiry, new methods are introduced, and then they also are subject to critique” (p. 961). This stance fits with Bauman’s (1991) notion of a “re-evaluation of modernity” (p. 115), implying a specific questioning of *whose* knowledge is produced and given authority, rather than assuming that truth exists without or outside a context. Re-evaluating ideas of knowledge production enables questioning *how* knowledge about child sexuality is produced and what that knowledge *does*. New ways of looking at childhood and sexuality, and new ways of inquiry into these constructions, offer possibilities for new knowledge. The adoption of a postmodernist approach in this thesis allowed me to question those aspects of modernist practice that located childhood and/or sexuality as fixed universal truths.

How is knowledge produced in postmodern research?

A postmodern approach supports this research because its critique of knowledge production and knowledge construction coheres with my experience and thinking for this study on child sexuality. Knowledge is not some observable and definable object sitting apart from people’s lived experience. Knowledge, in postmodern research, is understood as fragmentary and contestable, unstable and unsettled (Lather, 1991). Lyotard (1979/1984) questions knowledge as both process and product. Postmodern thinking therefore constructs research as drawing upon the

human experience of both the research participant and the researcher (B. Davies, 1994; Weedon, 1997). A researcher actively constructs knowledge within cultural and political contexts as both participant and author. Knowledge is subjective and specific. Postmodern research is a hybrid process that values local knowledges (see Geertz, 1974, 1983) of participant and researcher (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). The Prologue above disclosed some of my personal and professional history related to this project. Postmodern research allows personal and professional knowledge as well as welcoming multiple narratives of participants. In Chapters 6 to 8, specific textual fragments are presented for analysis rather than trying to summarise the general text of transcripts. New knowledge produced is analytical of political and historical threads in the language about childhood sexuality.

What does knowledge do in postmodern thinking?

In postmodern research, research knowledge is understood as created through language. Swiss linguist de Saussure argued that language is not representative of reality but produces its own reality (see Edley, 2001; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Weedon, 1997). Knowledge is contingent, always produced in relation to a specific perspective, including cultural and political perspectives. As Lather (1991) states, “to write ‘postmodern’ is to simultaneously use and call into question a discourse, to both challenge and inscribe dominant meaning systems in ways that construct our own categories and frameworks as contingent, positioned, partial” (p. 1). Research within the postmodern does not claim neutrality for the researcher, or any sense of being unbiased, but acknowledges that researcher values “permeate inquiry” (Lather, 1991, p. 2). This process of knowledge

production works to present a range of experiences and descriptions of children and sexuality. It is influenced by researcher experience and thinking, yet it is critically positioned at the same time as potentially offering something new and different (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). A postmodern project produces knowledge that is critical of the constraints and limitations within research, and transparent about how it is itself constructed and politically located. I now ask whose knowledge is being presented and what claims can be made for originality and authorship.

Whose knowledge is (re)presented in postmodern research?

This research aims for a process that is relational and ethical in its procedures of gathering, collecting and retrieving data, and of the kind of intertextual representation of participants' material (Lyotard, 1979/1984; St. Pierre, 2013). In this approach, the production of knowledge draws upon participants' personal narratives, assisted by an analytical process that is a constructed *bricolage* (see Chapter 5; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2005; Kincheloe, 2001). *Bricolage* embraces ontological and epistemological complexity as knowledge is constructed from more than human experience alone, so can be seen as a hybrid representation. Postmodern research engages participants and researcher "both in shaping reality and in creating the research processes and narratives that represent it" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 317). This construction of knowledge is not produced in isolation, but within a process of engagement and representation that acknowledges that research is partial.

Knowledge is not produced in isolation

An expectation of doctoral research is to produce an original and creative contribution to a body of knowledge. Research is therefore linked with strands and threads of knowledge through literature and dialogue. This project is positioned as a small piece in a wider patchwork quilt (see Koelsch, 2012; Saukko, 2000) of stories/narratives/discourses on childhood sexuality.

This postmodern research is situated within a framework that continually asks questions about what knowledge is and how it is constructed, what knowledge does and how it is (re)presented. This study involved a selective and critical reading of material about child development and childhood studies, together with literature on sexual development. A postmodern lens assumes and analyses relations of power that are produced within constructions of childhood and sexuality. Critical attention is given to the politics of language and power relations.

Postmodern theory of language contributes to “discursive or social constructionist research” (Edley, 2001, p. 433) and Burr (2003) describes as the “cultural and intellectual backcloth against which social constructionism has taken shape” (p. 10). This too is a way of questioning and understanding multiple realities in people’s lives.

2.2 Social constructionism: Questioning and understanding multiple realities

Knowledge is a process of social creation where values, ethics and politics are viewed as central. These central ideas are important, since this research emerged from a context of counselling practice that focussed on relational care and

personal meaning-making for children and families. A social constructionist understanding of knowledge stands in contrast to an individualist and value-free, propositional knowledge (Gergen, 2015). Social constructionism takes a critical perspective on taken-for-granted truth and empiricist views of knowledge (Danzinger, 1997; Gergen, 2015). Ideas of reality are approached with curiosity to explore what those ideas offer and what they deny (Dragonas, Gergen, McNamee & Tseliou, 2015). Dragonas et al. (2015, p. ix) remark, “if we are free to understand in many different ways, and there are no necessary logics, then we are invited to play with the taken for granted world we inhabit”. This freedom for understanding and invitation to play in social constructionism supports the approach in this thesis to analyse fragments of text within the analytical chapters.

Berger and Luckman (1966) introduced the concept of social constructionism in *The Social Construction of Reality*. Originating in the field of sociology, social constructionism was also applied “in areas such as health psychology, counselling and therapy, developmental and educational psychology” (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 2). Social constructionism confronted thinking that there is an essentialist reality and that ‘knowledge is stable’ (McLeod, 2011). The inclusion of social constructionist critique in this project, supports questioning about sexuality in Chapter 3 and childhood in Chapter 4. It facilitates an exploration of the production of power in language and the power-effects that language has on people and relationships.

Language is constitutive and social

A social constructionist critique explores how realities and relationships are constructed and mediated through language (Gergen, 1994), identified as “a

matrix of meaning-making” (Neimeyer, 1998, p. 135). Edley (2001) notes that ‘reality’, in social constructionism, “isn’t so much mirrored in talk and texts as actually *constituted* by them” (p. 435, emphasis in original). Noticeably, all these functions are social, they involve relational interaction between people. The place and function of language within this research is examined further below, within poststructuralist theory, where particular focus moves beyond the constitutive nature of language to the effects of power relations that language produces. Social constructionism, as a way of scrutinising the process of producing knowledge, has its critics.

Shades of social constructionism

Social constructionism includes a range of approaches and is not a singular entity or theory (see Edley, 2001). A significant commonality among different approaches is the constitutive nature of language and that reality is dependent upon one’s culture and history. Also common between approaches is “an emphasis on the discursive constitution of knowledge and the related demystification of scientific authority” (Danzinger, 1997, p. 400). Dragonas et al. (2015) identify the centrality of the place of language as a form of social action, and that meanings of reality are constructed through relationship. Burr (2003, 2015) refers to ‘a family resemblance’ between varieties, categorised as four shared ideas:

- a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge;
- the view that knowledge and meaning (including about ourselves) are known through specific cultural and historical contexts/viewpoints;
- that our knowing of the world can only occur through social interactions;

- that there are different constructions of the world, and understanding of reality, which call upon different responses, outcomes, actions.

Significantly, the use of power is not directly stated in this ‘family resemblance’.

Two descriptions of difference in social constructionism are isolated, related to understandings of power. Danzinger (1997) refers to light or dark social constructionism, where knowledge and understanding exists within micro- or macro-social structures. Burr (2003, 2015) describes micro/macro as broad approaches to distinguish these understandings. Light or micro approaches focus more on interactions between people, “treating all social life as a ‘conversation’” (Danzinger, 1997, p. 411), where meaning is constructed within “present dialogue” (p. 410). Macro or deeper, darker approaches respond to wider social and political systems where discourse is “embedded in relations of power”, connecting with “Foucault’s conjunction of power/knowledge” where “talk and text are inseparable from manifestations of power” (Danzinger, 1997, p. 410).

Danzinger’s metaphor of a darker social constructionism offers a useful perspective through which to conceptualise power relations and discourse in relational contexts, and for the analysis of language in this research on child sexuality as a site of power relations. Burr (2003) refers to Foucauldian discourse analysis as a “prominent representative” (p. 21) of macro social constructionism. It is this deeper, darker/macro approach to social constructionism that this project utilises.

There are some limitations to adopting a social constructionist understanding of knowledge construction. These include the theory’s ability to describe the influences of embodied factors and the possibilities and constraints in the material world (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 2). Language, according to

Edley (2001), is not the only reality seen by most social constructionists. Cromby and Nightingale (1999) claim that, “We must find ways of talking and writing about the world which...explicitly acknowledge the situatedness of our own texts within it” (p. 10). Considering its limitations, this project, nonetheless, adopts a deeper, dark or macro social constructionist approach to questioning constructions of childhood and sexuality.

What do social constructionist ideas contribute to this thesis?

The period in which this thesis is written is one of shifting philosophical landscapes on the theory of knowledge. There are criticisms of social constructionism as partial in ways of understanding knowledge, and that social constructionist ideas have limitations in describing the reality of embodied knowing (Butler, 1999, 2011) and of material things (Barad, 2008; Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012). Noting this criticism, I do introduce Foucault’s work (later in this chapter) for its attention to material effects of power on the body through discourse about sex (see Butler, 1993, 2011; Egan & Hawkes, 2008; Hunt, 1992). By focussing specifically on discursive practices around understandings of sexuality and children, this project particularly recognises the necessity of attending to the ideas of multiple ways of knowing about children’s embodied interactions, their sexual experiences and sexual knowledge. Nonetheless, the critical origins of social constructionism as questioning social realities, such as childhood and of gender and sexuality, provide a compelling theory. Social constructionist questioning positions this thesis towards a critical reading of texts and claims of truth about children and sexuality. In Chapters 3 and 4, I review

particular literature that is critical of the social constructions of ‘sexuality’ and ‘childhood’.

Key ideas on social constructionism

I have now positioned this project as adopting a social constructionist critique of essentialist and universalist notions of the person within a wider postmodern framing. Drawing on postmodern approaches in qualitative research, social constructionist ideas offer a platform to question, through language, understandings of truth and reality. Constructing knowledge cannot avoid embodied and material realities alongside socially constructed historical and cultural knowledge, but there is a limitation to the scope of this project.

Poststructuralism is the theoretical exploration of postmodern ideas (Weedon, 1997; Richardson, 1997) and focuses specifically on links across language, subjectivity and power.

2.3 Poststructuralism – Analysing power within language

Poststructuralist theory, presented here, helps critically inform awareness and analysis of power relations, and is particularly helpful with regard to analyses of gendered and cultural notions of childhood, drawing particularly on the work of Michel Foucault, Derrida’s approach to deconstruction, and the work of Judith Butler. Finally, queer theory is presented to expand the approach to querying normative practices in gender and sexuality.

Language

Following the notion that language is “the centrepiece” of poststructuralism (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), this thesis examines language as a key operational “site for exploration and struggle” (p. 961) related to the child and childhood, and to sex and sexuality. A poststructuralist approach to experience is radically different to normative everyday understandings, but assumes that “experience has no inherent essential meaning” (Weedon, 1997, p. 33). The Prologue to this thesis includes various ways that children and sexuality were described within professional counselling practice. The language in these descriptions produces power effects for children and adults, including the therapist.

Language is the place for analysis of understanding meaning and power in social contexts. Language is the site “where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is *constructed*” (Weedon, 1997, p. 21). Language is the conduit for constructions of childhoods, sexualities and gender. Weedon (1997) questions the “naïve view of language as transparent and true” (p. 74) in relation to notions of ‘common sense’. By constructing social meanings as true, a ‘common sense’ approach has normalising effects on views of gender and sexuality. Common sense’s “power comes from its claim to be natural, obvious and therefore true” (p. 74). Language is not representative of reality but “a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960) producing meaning for specific cultural and local contexts. Poststructuralism, write Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), “links language, subjectivity, social organization, and power. The centrepiece is language. Language does not ‘reflect’ social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality” (p. 961).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue (as does Derrida, see below) that “language is an unstable system of referents, thus it is impossible ever to capture completely the meaning of an action, text, or intention” (p. 27). I now present the notion of subjectivity as necessary to understand the person as multiphrenic within poststructuralist theory.

Language and subjectivity

Humanist modernist thinking claims that the capacity to know and be known can be externally and independently verified by how people perform to a system of rules (see Lather, 1991). Foucault (1978/1990) gives examples of how children have been shaped by specific practices in school to conform and be assessed (see pp. 27-30). Within the humanist paradigm, the individual’s personality and any difference or problems in a person’s experience (e.g., regarding “self-esteem”, “lack of resilience”, illness, or “deviance”) could be subjected to classification. The poststructuralist human person, however, is understood by multiple and diverse subjectivities, subject to states of disunity and conflict (Weedon, 1997) and not the identity of the unified rational subject of humanism. The notion of subjectivity offers an understanding of a person within a range of discursive contexts. A person does not plan and direct their lives by reason alone, nor can they depend on universal notions of language and meaning to make meaning from their own knowledge of experience. Weedon (1997) locates subjectivity as “most obviously the site of the consensual regulation of individuals” (p. 108) where, through “a constantly repeated process, which begins at birth and [repeats] continually throughout life...[there are] implications for the...subjectivity of the individual human agent” (pp. 108-109). As language is not a fixed referent for

meaning, subjectivity “depends upon the particular theories or stories about the nature of humanity that are to be found embedded in our language” (Burr, 2003, p. 139). Foucault’s writing on discourse offers a window into how poststructural understandings of subjectivity operate. The next section presents Foucault’s key ideas on discourse, power/knowledge and governmentality. These underpin the methodological approach in this research to develop analysis of power in sexuality discourse.

Foucault and poststructuralist thought

A number of Foucault’s ideas are presented in this section to provide a methodological foundation for the approach taken to my reading, interviewing and analysing of material for this study. Foucault’s notion of ‘discourse’ invites understanding of the term ‘discourse’ as more than simply ‘linguistic’. Rather, discourse indicates practices of speech/action that are linguistic as well as performative, and which are historically situated and culturally driven. Furthermore, Foucault’s notion is expanded through the works of Butler.

Foucault’s (1982) objective in his work, “has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (p. 777). As ‘the subject’ is an important focus of his research, he finds it “necessary to expand the dimensions of a definition of power if one wanted to use this definition in studying the objectivizing of the subject” (p. 778). Foucault’s (1975/1977) interest in history is not a focus on the past, but writing a history of the present. He conceptualises this in two ways: as a need for “a historical awareness of our present circumstance... [and]... to check the type of reality with which we are dealing” (1982, p. 778). He applies these ideas by analysing

“specific rationalities” (p. 780), “with reference to a fundamental experience” (p. 779), such as sexuality. O’Farrell (2005) claims that to use Foucault is to subvert “the status quo” (p. 2), as Foucault’s theory explores the nature and function of “historically specific discursive relations and social practices” (Weedon, 1997, p. 22).

In Foucault’s work, language is constitutive of subjectivity and meaning. Relations of power are embedded in the language used in descriptions of reality and meaning. Stories are performative of people’s knowledge about themselves and their worlds, their sense of themselves (Weedon, 1997). Foucault’s use of discourse provides a useful method for framing and analysing language within educational and social service disciplines and structures. This leads to an examination of Foucault’s work about discourse and related ideas, describing how these are significant theoretical foundations on which to analyse the research in this thesis.

Using discourse

In everyday language, discourse is used to refer to speech and conversation on a particular topic. Foucault’s notion of discourse examines more broadly the ways that text (i.e., spoken and written words and practices) historically shape knowledge and understandings within social and cultural contexts.

Acknowledging discourse as “a rather slippery notion”, O’Farrell (2005) describes Foucault’s use of the term as referring “to the material verbal traces left by history” (p. 133). Foucault (1969/1972) himself defines discourses as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 54). Yet, these

practices, although systematic, are not straightforward. Foucault (1978/1990) further suggests that:

Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. (pp. 101-102)

Therefore, discourse pertains to “systematic and institutionalised ways of speaking/writing which form the objects of which they speak, *and* conceal their role in doing so” (Lowe, 1999, p. 78). Using discourse in this study of childhood sexuality provides a method through which to analyse the sites of childhood and sexuality. Analysing discourse in this research aims to deconstruct the practices of regulation of the object of ‘childhood sexuality’ *and* the disciplinary tactics of discourse upon adults and children. In Foucault’s analysis, governmentality is exercised within individualisation techniques and modes of objectification of the subject/individual and their body, while totalisation procedures are exercised in the structures of society (see sections below on governmentality). This project considers the exercise of governmentality on children and adults (for example, within practices of age and innocence, and notions of precocious and deviant) while societal structures effect procedures that totalise children and adults (for example, within hegemonic structures of gender and sex).

Using this notion of governmentality, analysis of child sexuality discourse can provide a range of understandings about the ways that structures of society and normative notions of the body are shaped through social ‘institutions’, such as literature, government policies and individual and societal narratives. Rabinow

(1984) notes that “Foucault has been consistently interested in the shifting ways that the body and the social institutions related to it have entered into political relations” (p. 10). O’Farrell (2005) also understands Foucault’s work as “consistently interested in...how human beings seek to impose order on the world via their social structures and knowledge...” (p. 11). To locate my use of the notion of discourse for this thesis, I now examine more closely those ideas that Foucault uses to analyse the effects of power and of particular social norms.

Power/Knowledge

Within *The history of sexuality*, Foucault (1978/1990) argues that:

We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power... (p. 101)

Foucault states that his focus is ‘the subject and power’ (Foucault, 1982). His purpose is to explore how the human sciences operate and to analyse what these operations produce (Rabinow, 1984). These ideas have relevance to this study through problematising childhood sexuality, by revealing historical and social locations of childhood within social and cultural spaces, and utilising Foucault’s (1978/1990, 1985/1990, 1986/1988) examination of sexuality.

Foucault defines the use of technologies of power as ways in which subjectification occurs to discipline the body. Utilising Bentham’s model of the Panoptican prison, Foucault describes this “diabolical” (1975/1977) idea as, “a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 156). Both the prison

inmates and their supervisor are under ‘the gaze’, each under surveillance.

Foucault uses these ideas in thinking about how the subject is active in disciplining their own body, their own thinking and their own actions in relation to others and themselves. The environment thus produces “docile bodies” that are “disciplined” with maximum efficiency yet requiring minimum supervision (Foucault, 1975/1977). These ideas are applicable to this research. Children are under the gaze of adults, and those adults are also under surveillance (for example, parents under the surveillance of other parents and of teachers, and of ‘authorities’; teachers under the gaze of parents and principals). Yet the techniques which produce this surveillance is not a prison, but a range of social, cultural and political practices in people’s lives. Foucault describes these practices as a range of technologies and techniques that produce power/knowledge and its effects.

Governmentality and individualising techniques: Modes of objectification

Foucault focusses on governing practices that objectify people called individualisation techniques. Foucault (1982) identifies three such modes of objectification: dividing practices; scientific classification; and subjectification. Each mode is concerned with how the subject is constituted within discourse, making use of ideas, beliefs, and traditional ways of speaking and acting. These modes are relevant to my study and deserve some elucidation to support the lens with which the literature in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 is structured and analysed.

Scientific classification

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1969/1970) espouses how human beings are objectified through practices of scientific classification. Most notably, this mode of objectification can be understood through the example of mental health classification systems. One such example is the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association. The DSM uses diagnostic codes linked to the *International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Edition* (ICD-10)² adopted by member states of the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2016). Systems of classification are also adopted within education and social service contexts. These have effects for children who, for example, have been assessed and labelled as acting sexually. For children whose actions are perceived as sexual, the effects from objectification through classification reverberate socially and spatially in school, home and other contexts. These effects for children may include longer term involvement with isolating practices of seclusion from peers, or specific marking to identify within groups of children, and reporting within records or files that travel historically through school, across schools, and beyond (e.g., Flanagan, 2009, 2010).

Dividing practices

For Foucault (1973/1994), dividing practices are practices of power in language that define particular groups of people as different. Such practices marginalise individuals and groups within society, and are applied in medicine, education, and

² Information about the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) can be accessed through the World Health Organisation (WHO). While the information about the DSM was current at the time of writing, a newer version of ICD (the ICD-11 for Mental Health and Behavioural Disorders) was released on 18 June 2018, see <https://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/>.

in governing 'the family'. Named 'techniques of domination', Foucault outlines that "the subject is objectified by a process of division either within himself [sic] or from others" (Rabinow, 1984, p. 8). These are social practices of exclusion, sometimes spatial (e.g., requiring the hospitalisation of 'the insane'), which adapt scientific method to "categorise, distribute, and manipulate" people (Rabinow, 1984, p. 12). Adults do respond to children's actions that are considered sexual in ways that socially and spatially separate and isolate them, and result in descriptions of risk and danger. These responses, as practices of surveillance, in turn position children's understandings about themselves under the gaze and thereby how they understand themselves in relation to others. Childhood is regulated through dividing practices of, among others, age and knowledge. Under the guise of protection, children of particular age are 'protected' from sexual knowledge. Children are objectified as innocent and ignorant of sexuality, so that knowledge of sexuality is controlled and hidden through techniques of domination and practices of division. The notion of protection is applied in ways that suggests knowledge of sexuality by children of a young age indicates abuse or potential harm. In this way, "the constituted subject can be seen as a victim caught up in processes of objectification and constraint" (Rabinow, 1984, p. 10).

Subjectification

There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his [sic] own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault, 1982, p. 781)

Whereas scientific classification and dividing practices involve discipline and regulation of others and by structures upon a person and society, subjectification is the “way a human being turns himself [sic] into a subject” (Foucault, 1982, p.778). In this way a person is not passive to the process, but an active subject: “Foucault looks at those processes of self-formation in which the person is active” (Rabinow, 1984, p. 11) and “those (processes) that we have used to form ourselves into meaning-giving selves” (p. 12).

In *Discipline and Punish* and in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1975/1977, 1978/1990) shows that the processes of subjectification and dividing practices “can be effectively combined, although they are analytically distinguishable” (Rabinow, 1984, p. 11). This is important because the technologies of power that produce the subject have effects not only on individuals but also on society. The subjectification of a child through technologies of sexuality and gender discourses produces individualising techniques within families and schools. Parents and teachers apply practices of age and gender so that children’s access to knowledge of sex depends on age and what, as boys and girls, it is thought they should know. Through this process, adults are themselves constituted as sexed and gendered subjects and, at the same time, engage in relations of power that constructs a childhood that actively shapes itself as sexed and gendered. In these ways, practices of adults discipline and subjectify children.

Governmentality: Practices of totalising procedures

[T]he fact that the state’s power...is both an individualizing and a totalizing form of power. ... [it is] a tricky combination in the same

political structures of individualization techniques and of totalization procedures. (Foucault, 1982, p. 782)

Further to the three modes of objectification or individualisation techniques, Foucault (1982) names another practice of governmentality, that of totalising procedures. Foucault (1978/2002) recognises a shift over the last two centuries in the governance of people's lives – a shift from the state where governance by the monarchy focussed on the prince (or equivalent) as individual, to governance by the state focussing on society, of systems and structures of households and families, and of individuals. “Society was becoming a political target” (Rabinow, 1984, p. 15) and statistics had become the science of the state. With attention to the art of government, Foucault (1978/1990) calls this new regime of power in individuals' lives ‘bio-power’, a form of governmentality (see section below on bio-power and sexuality). Its associated ideas of individualisation techniques and totalisation procedures have effects for children and adults in the practices of power relations between them.

Normativity and normalisation

Foucault (1975/1977) identifies practices of normalisation throughout society:

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the ‘social-worker’-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he [sic] may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements. (p. 304)

Individuals and groups of people who discipline their lives through the subjectifying practices of the gaze are, as Foucault identifies, in a process of normalisation. That is, “a normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 144).

‘Judges’ are, interestingly, all well-educated, knowledgeable, and powerful in their relational position with others. The “*techniques* of power [are] present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family...schools...)...” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 141). The present research attempts to demonstrate the effects of normalising practices and judgements on children, and on adults who are identified as responsible ‘for’ children (parents, teachers, counsellors). Ideas of ‘natural’ sex and gender are reiterated in societal and family practices. Through this reiteration, power is produced “through uncritical acceptance of particular norms as natural” (D. Taylor, 2009, p. 53).

Using Foucault’s thinking on normativity, D. Taylor (2009) presents an example of ‘normalising norms’ on gender. She describes gender,

...where subjects are divided into two mutually exclusive groups, the appropriate behaviors of which are predetermined and which these subjects are encouraged to repeat over and over again. In time, the repeated behaviors become embedded to the point where they are perceived not as a particular set of prevailing norms, but instead simply as “normal”, inevitable, and therefore immune to critical analysis. (D. Taylor, 2009, p. 47)

This controlling of bodies and regulation of societies is bio-power. Through practices of heterosexual normativity and developmental normativity for children

about sex/sexuality and gender, Foucault's thinking is useful to analyse the operation of bio-power in reiterated practices of language and behaviour.

Biopower and sexuality

Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species. It was employed as a standard for the disciplines and as a basis for regulations...it was traced back into the earliest years of childhood; it became the stamp of individuality...But one also sees it becoming the theme of political operations, economic interventions (through incitements to or curbs on procreation), and ideological campaigns for raising standards of morality and responsibility: it was put forward as the index of a society's strength, revealing of both its political energy and its biological vigor. (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 146)

Foucault's understanding of power/knowledge and governance practices related to managing populations and individuals, is described through his explanation of bio-power and biopolitics (Foucault, 1978/1990). These concepts focus on the individual body as machine ("an anatomo-politics of the human body") and the 'species body' as biological process ("a biopolitics of the population") (p. 139). Foucault reflects on examples of the family, police, army and schools, but identifies sexuality as where "concrete arrangements...would go to make up the great technology of power in the nineteenth century" (p. 140). Particularly, this is visible within measurements, assessments and interventions.

Engaging Foucault's thinking on power/knowledge into this study requires questioning how relations and practices produce children's sexual/gendered subjectivities. In what ways, through language, are children understood across

history and currently as sexual subjects within families and societies? Foucault's method of discourse analysis supports the methodology for examining this question.

The centrality of Foucault and discourse

Scheurich and McKenzie (2005) warn researchers who utilise Foucault's thinking to not "cherry pick one concept" (p. 859), as his ideas link together within his archaeological and genealogical practices. In this chapter, as throughout the thesis, Foucault's thinking is embedded towards a coherent examination of discourse and analysis of power. Through taking up a Foucauldian conceptualisation, this thesis explores particular ways that children are made sexual subjects through language. This will be approached, firstly, by undertaking "a historical awareness for our present circumstance" (Foucault, 1982, p. 778) in relation to constructions of sexuality (see Chapter 3) and to constructions of childhood sexuality through an examination of mainly Western accounts of childhood (see Chapter 4). Secondly, "to check the type of reality with which we are dealing" (Foucault, 1982, p. 778) will involve using children's "fundamental experience" (p. 779) of sexuality. This thesis draws upon vignettes that re-tell/recount children's experience in a fictionalised form, from examples told me in my professional counselling practice (see Chapter 5). In this research, parents, teachers and therapists (as significant adults in children's lives) are invited to respond to these vignettes as a process of sharing "specific rationalities" on childhood sexuality. A selection of these responses are analysed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. To explore and expose discourse, governmentality and power relations, deconstruction is now introduced as both research method and an analytical tool of language.

Derrida and ‘deconstruction’ of text

[T]he core of Derrida’s analysis, or ‘deconstruction’, is a sustained argument against the possibility of anything pure and simple which can serve as the foundation for the meaning of signs. (Garver, 1973, p. xxii)

Derrida’s notion of deconstruction is applied within this study to disturb and open up dominant knowledges (Derrida, 1967/1976) about childhood sexuality, and to explore places and events to unsettle structures and destabilise that which is normative (A. Y. Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Derrida (1967/1976) introduces the idea of deconstruction as an analysis of language (Garver, 1973) to expose distinctions between the idea of a fixed meaning for a text and the possibility of multiple meanings. Derrida’s critique questions Saussure’s structuralist claim that “ideas represented by our linguistic signs already stand in logical relations to one another before we have signs to represent them” (Garver, 1973, p. xi). Adopting Derrida’s approach of deconstruction to question ideas of sexuality and childhood, and meanings of childhood sexuality, offers space for exploring and expansion from limited to multiple meanings. For example, as Caputo (1997) describes, when it comes to hierarchical and binary spaces and places such as sexuality and gender, Derrida views that, “the way to break this up is to open all the *other* places that this binary scheme close off” (Caputo, 1997, p. 104, emphasis in original). This breaking up and questioning opens possibilities for the decomposition of both the spoken word (e.g., within participants’ talk) and within written text.

Derrida’s (1967/1976) critique of a fixed or universal meaning for a word or text is further illuminated in his opposition between writing and speech. This

explains that a “notion of a direct relationship between signifier and signified is no longer tenable, and instead we have infinite shifts in meaning relayed from one signifier to another” (Guillemette & Cossette, 2006, n. p.). Derrida (1978) considers there to be a coincidence between the thing talked about (the signified) and the representation of it (the signifier). Furthermore, states Staten (1985), Derrida insists that there is “a margin of opacity”, an absence or a gap within the “sign” that “gives an opening to the forces of decomposition” (Staten, 1985, p. 120). With each iteration, repetition, re-writing or re-telling of the sign, Derrida (1967/1973, 1967/1976) claims it is altered. In this way, Derrida adds to Foucault’s (1978/1990) understanding of discourse as “an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 101). Each iteration potentially subverts the status quo (see O’Farrell, 2005). This alteration of meaning is important to this research regarding the meanings of childhood and sexuality. Constructions of childhood and sexuality are not stable but are fluid in their meaning. According to Strathern (2000), Derrida “shows *how* a text achieves meaning, rather than *what* it means” (p. 40, emphasis in original).

Knowledge of gender, for example, has traditionally been presented as fixed and normative (see above section on normativity and normalisation), coming from nature (as in ‘natural law’) or some divine revelation or scientific classification which has presented itself as unquestioning (i.e., cultural). This study takes the approach that “nature is a discursive concept” [and thereby] “a product of power relations” (Dingler, 2005, p. 209). Gender and sex/sexuality are also products of power relations. Deconstructing the gender-text, Davies offers the critique, that:

The division of people into males and females is so fundamental to our talk as usual and to our understanding of identity, that it is generally understood as a natural fact of the real world rather than something we have learned to see as natural. (B. Davies, 1993, p. 7)

In this example, an empirical, naturalist, and scientific position would hold that there is a fixed meaning of gender as binary, male or female. However, gender is deconstructed and decomposed within poststructuralist critical thought to expand meanings that include a range wider than a male/female binary – such as inter-sex, gender-neutral or indeterminate sex, for example. Derrida (1973) discusses *différance* (see Caputo, 1997) as going beyond or beneath the normative binary, to open up possibilities to “innumerable genders...multiplying the places of sexual spacing” (Caputo, 1997, p. 105). With the example of sexual orientation, where the dominant construction is heterosexuality, a deconstructive analysis enables naming of different realities (*différance*) and asking alternative questions for understanding, positionality, and practices of sexuality in people’s lives. Derrida’s critical application of deconstruction supports this thesis, by adopting a curious approach to text that is sceptical of a normed or singular meaning. Rather, using deconstruction to expose “hidden metaphysical binarisms that underlie and structure western thought” (B. Davies, 1994, p. 39) offers possibilities to examine how text is woven discursively through history and culture, particularly in the notions related to childhood and sexuality.

The implication for this thesis from Derrida’s critique about writing and speech, is to disclose an ethical positioning that the writing and construction of knowledge in this thesis is not equated to what participants have said or even meant in their contributions. Nor is it an exhaustive representation of this subject

or the findings. A particular contribution to ethical positioning comes through feminist poststructuralism. Butler's thinking is now introduced, providing a unique contribution and a legacy that is the critical analysis of gender in power relations.

Feminist poststructuralism: Gender and sex/sexuality

The overall framework for this study is located with three main theorists:

Foucault's thinking on discourse, to map relations of power related to sex/sexuality which work to construct children's sexed/gendered/sexual subjectivities within the gathered text; Derrida's ideas of deconstruction, to disturb and open up dominant knowledges, and to explore places and events to unsettle structures; and Butler's notion of performativity, to "undo normative categories that place rigid structures on how people live out their lives" (A. Y. Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 72). Butler's thinking on performativity is an extension of Foucault's vision.

This study necessarily intersects with discourses on gender, since sex/sexuality in human beings' lives is produced within relationships that draw on practices that construct gendered identities. "The practice by which gendering occurs, the embodying of norms, is a compulsory practice, a forcible production" states Butler (1997, p. 17). In poststructuralist theory, Weedon (1997) claims, "the meaning of gender" is recognised as "both socially produced and variable between different forms of discourse" (p. 22). Gavey (1997) suggests that "feminist poststructuralism offers us ... a theoretical basis for analyzing the subjectivities of women and men in relation to language, other cultural practices, and the material conditions of our lives" (p. 61). Given Lather's (1991) identification of research

“as an enactment of power relations” (p. 112), gender analysis cannot be omitted.

B. Davies (1994) situates gender analysis within poststructuralist theory, acknowledging that it “has opened up exciting new ways of analysing the processes whereby we become gendered” (p. 1). A number of authors further develop feminist poststructuralist thought with intersections of sex/gender/sexuality and childhood (e.g., Blaise, 2010; Gunn & Smith, 2015; Renold, 2005; Renold, Ringrose & Egan, 2015; Robinson, 2013) and these are explored in Chapter 4.

Butlerian Performativity

Butler’s (1990, 1999) notion of performativity exemplifies how people are positioned in discourse, in ways performative of gender. Developing from the Foucauldian theory of discourse and attending to power in gender relations, Butler describes gender as performative within relational contexts. In particular, gender becomes performative through the concept of citational chains: ways of thinking/speaking that are repeated and take on a sense of the norm.

“Performativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted,” explains Butler (1997, p. 17), then describing ‘gendering’ as “the embodying of norms, ... a compulsory practice, a forcible production” (p. 17).

Gender is performative insofar as it is the *effect* of a regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized *under constraint*. Social constraints, taboos, prohibitions, and threats of punishment operate in the ritualized repetition of norms, and this repetition constitutes the temporalized scene of gender construction and destabilization. (Butler, 1997, p. 16)

Butler identifies material and linguistic performativity of gender, whether there is a difference between gender norms and the performative use of language. Gender norms require embodiment within femininity and masculinity, dominated by ideas of heterosexuality and the heterosexual bond (see Butler, 1997, pp. 17-18).

Citational language works to repeat ideas that shape and sustain dominant notions of normativity. Butler gives examples of what she calls the “initiatory performative”, for example, “it’s a girl”, where parents and family are “compelled to ‘cite’ the norm in order to qualify [the child] and [that she] remain a viable subject” (p. 18). From birth, language about children as girls and boys reiterates ideas of girlhood and boyhood, thereby constructing children as gendered according to dominant and normative discourses on gendered childhood.

Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, and punishment.

...this citation of the gender norm is necessary in order to qualify as a “one”, to become viable as a “one”, where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms ... It is in terms of a norm that compels a certain “citation” in order for a viable subject to be produced... (Butler, 1997, p. 18)

This research draws on Butlerian notions of performativity, where linguistic linkages produce normative constructions of gender and of sex/sexuality, particularly in relation to childhood. By illuminating and deconstructing performatives of language that forcibly shape gender and sex, the present study aims to highlight the clichés and citational chains that constrain childhood and children. This theory is further explicated in Chapter 3 where sexuality is

deconstructed as performative utterance, and in Chapter 6 where participants' talk is analysed utilising Butler's theory.

The heterosexual matrix

Alongside Foucault, Butler (1992) argues that ideas of normative and normalised sex and sexuality are given the status of being 'natural'. This naturalisation of sex is positioned within the norm as scientific truth that is irrefutable. The language of naturalised sex produces power when spoken and practiced.

Naturalized as heterosexual, [sex] is designed to regulate and secure the reproduction of life. Having a true sex with a biological destiny and natural heterosexuality thus becomes essential to the aim of power, now understood as the disciplinary reproduction of life. (Butler, 1992, pp. 344-345)

Butler (1990, 1999) also theorises heteronormativity within the production of the 'heterosexual matrix'. Butler's (1999) effort in this theory is "to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power" (p. 44).

Referred by Tredway (2014) as "a sex-gender-sexuality tripartite system" (p. 164), the heterosexual matrix describes where the materiality of sex is forcibly produced within a framework that produces femininity, masculinity and heterosexuality as intelligible (see Blaise, 2005, 2009). It is a set of power relations that are compulsory and enforced within social and cultural discourses. The resulting norm for one's sexuality is normative heterosexuality based on one's sex as male or female, and one's gender as therefore masculine if male or feminine if female. Butler's work, in deconstructing sexuality through the

heterosexual matrix, is to trouble gender as a compulsory sexuality according to these notions of what is natural and normal.

Queer theory, as an application of poststructuralist thought that analyses sex/sexuality and gender, is now introduced. This theory offers an additional lens through which to analyse gendered relations of power in language about children and sexuality.

Queer Theory: Que(e)rying normativity

The focus in this section on queer theory is furthering Foucault's and Butler's ideas that deconstruct gendered norms on sex/sexuality and gender. Introducing this theory prepares for Chapter 4 where particular applications of queer theory to childhood sexuality are examined.

Plummer (2005) states that "[q]ueer theory is really poststructuralism (and postmodernism) applied to sexualities and genders" (p. 365). Plummer regards "queer" as working on the researcher in discourse, as well as ways of deconstructing categories. By questioning notions within social and cultural contexts, the researcher is also in a process of questioning their own senses of "closure or settlement" about ideas and practices. Queer theory, claims Plummer, is a refusal of the orthodox related to gender and sexuality, as it both "transgresses and subverts" (2005, p. 359) the norm. Butler (1997) also writes about queer thinking as subversion, particularly as "the destabilizing of the heterosexual presumption" (p. 24). The notions of subversion and destabilisation hold value for this project, to trouble notions of normative childhood in relation to normative sexuality.

Jagose (1996) introduces a poststructuralist context for a theoretical framework of queer theory. Drawing upon Foucault and Butler, Jagose explains:

...Foucault has been more explicitly engaged in denaturalising dominant understandings of sexual identity. In emphasising that sexuality is not an essentially personal attribute but an available cultural category – and that it is the effect of power rather than simply its object – Foucault’s writings have been crucially significant for the development of ...queer activism and scholarship. (Jagose, 1996, p. 79)

Jagose continues to explore Foucault’s writings on the operations of power, citing his words, that “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 95). Jagose (1996) also draws on Butler’s theory of performativity, in that “gender is refigured by Butler as a cultural fiction, a performative effect of reiterative acts” (p. 84).

Heterosexuality is naturalised by the performative repetition of normative gender identities. Butler advocates contesting such naturalisation by means of a displaced repetition of its performativity that would draw attention to those processes that consolidate sexual identities. One of the strategies she recommends is a parodic repetition of gender norms. (Jagose, 1996, p. 85)

While Jagose links Foucault and Butler into queer theory, others develop and describe the application of queer theory. These ideas situate queer theory as a useful theoretical tool for this study of childhood sexuality.

Robinson (2005a) applies queer theory within early childhood education. She claims that “[q]ueer theory, which stems from poststructuralist theoretical perspectives, reinforces the notion that identities are not fixed or stable, but rather are shifting, contradictory, dynamic and constructed” (p. 25). Robinson further

states that queer theory “disrupts the notion that one’s gender and sexuality are inherently fixed in one’s biological sexed body, upholding the pluralities of sexuality and the multiplicity of gender” (2005b, p. 25). Robinson (2013) later describes queer theory as challenging normalising practices, in particular arguing that “the dualistic relationships of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual are destabilized through acknowledging a plurality of sexualities and a multiplicity of genders” (p. 5). Robinson and C. Davies (2015) then link Butler and Jagose, stating that “queer theory views subjectivity as fluid, unstable, dynamic and constructed. Queer theorists argue that all identities are performative and challenge the heteronormativity in gender and sexuality norms” (p. 177).

Taylor and Richardson (2005) offer a “queerer perspective on early childhood” (p. 163), and refer to “...the deconstructive focus of queer theory” (p. 168).

Through employing a non-normative, parodic and inappropriate coupling – which associates queerness rather than innocence with childhood, and fluidity rather than fixity to gender identities – we deliberately seek to interrupt the taken-for-granted natural order of things that infuses early childhood orthodoxy. (A. Taylor & Richardson, 2005, p. 163)

Taylor (2013) further writes about children’s excesses in their play, particularly around difference (such as race, nationality, hegemonic gender). “I am captivated by what I perceive to be young children’s inherent *queerness*, not their innocence, and I see this setting [early childhood] as a highly politicized and political one” (A. Taylor, 2013, p. 197).

A number of researchers apply queer theory in relation to their work with children, particularly about notions of gender and sexuality (Blaise, 2005; Blaise

& Taylor, 2012; Renold, 2005). These authors will be included in Chapter 3 to show how queer theory applies to “outing the ordinary, queering gender and compulsory heterosexuality” (Renold, 2005, p. 6).

Queer theory, therefore, supports this project by connecting and applying Foucault’s thought on discourse. Through analysing practices of power relations that are historical and cultural, queer theory subverts practices that reinforce normative thinking and acceptance of childhood sex/sexuality/gender norms. Together with feminist poststructuralist thought, particularly Butler’s analysis of performatives in language, ideas of normative sexuality and childhood are deconstructed. Queer theory will also be used in this thesis to help provide a framework and method in which to explore and examine research and participant data.

The effect of queer theory is to destabilise, to subvert the norm. This research explores queering/querying (Taylor & Richardson, 2005) normative citations about children and sexuality. To queer the notion of child sexuality is to invert notions of normative childhood that is innocent and naïve, towards a childhood that is open to sexuality and the possibility of a childhood that has a sexual subjectivity.

Locating my research as a postmodern project

Foucault has addressed the web of power and knowledge in historical studies...[and] Derrida has addressed language and deconstruction.
(Kvale, 1992, p. 2)

Thus far, I have described connections between social constructionist, poststructuralist and queer thinking that shape my conceptual framework. A

postmodern approach questions *how* knowledge about child sexuality is produced and what that knowledge *does*. Foucault and Derrida both questioned dominant understandings of knowledge and knowledge-production.

From Foucault's thought on discourse and power relations, feminist poststructuralist theory on power relations in gender, and queer theory taking a further critical perspective on gender, this project focusses on text and language as discursive practices that align with particular performatives of sexuality/gender in the lives of children.

The next two chapters present the literature review for this thesis. Chapter 3 builds on the conceptual framework of Chapter 2 to theorise sexuality/gender. It throws light onto the contested notion of childhood sexuality, showing how poststructuralist and feminist authors apply the ideas of Foucault and Butler within theories of sexuality. Chapter 4 then gives an archaeological account of the history of childhood, predominantly in the Western world. It focusses particularly on the sexual lives of children. That chapter concludes with the research questions for this study.

Chapter 3

Theorising sexuality/gender

The theoretical ideas presented in Chapter 2 are applied here in five distinct ways, examining the concepts of ‘sexuality’ and ‘gender’ in childhood. First, the question is asked whether a definition of ‘sexuality’ is required or even possible. Sexuality is located, according to Egan and Hawkes (2008), in socio-cultural contexts. They claim:

[S]exuality is rarely about the interpersonal dynamics that go on in the bedroom rather it is reflective of larger socio-cultural contexts and the ‘various social practices that construct sexual regulations, give meaning to bodily activity, shape definitions and limit and control human behaviour’.
(Egan & Hawkes, 2008, p. 357)

Second, the chapter explores cultural differences about sexuality, as Western *scientia sexualis* and Eastern *ars erotica*, with Maori and Pasifika cultural notions of sexuality also included. Third, a range of theories of sexuality that emphasise biological discourses are presented and deconstructed: that sexuality can be ‘naturally’ categorised and instinctively known as ‘normal’. Sexological, psychoanalytical and social theories of sexuality are introduced to show how sexuality is constructed within discourses in science, ‘natural instinct’ and economics or commerce. These latter approaches sit to the side of how sexuality is conceptualised for this thesis. However, they do have relevance because participants reiterate these ideas within their talk, when they speak about normality and naturalness. Fourth, gendered theories are then examined. Feminist

accounts of gendered constructions of sexuality are presented before describing masculine constructions of sexuality. These too, to some degree, include a biological and deterministic focus. Fifth, Foucauldian and feminist poststructuralist perspectives on sexuality/gender are described. These engage specifically with Foucault's views of power/knowledge and the 'making of sexual subjects', and the views of other theorists who draw on these ideas. The central concepts from Chapter 2 (Foucauldian poststructuralist theory, feminist poststructuralist analysis, and queer theorising) are then utilised to deconstruct key historical and current constructions of sexuality as a concept and as a practice. This includes ideas drawn from the work of B. Davies (1991, 1994) on positioning theory linked to notions of agency. Specific views of Foucauldian and poststructuralist writers on sexuality/gender are then also included. From this point, I argue that concepts of what is thought to be 'natural' and 'normal', in terms of sexuality/gender when applied to children, construct very specific notions of what constitutes childhood sexuality. These notions include: the presence of a normative childhood as defined through specific (non-sexual) performatives, language of sex and gender as asexual/ignorant/innocent and heterosexual, and the idea that knowledge about childhood sexuality can be governed through performative language of adult sexuality. Normative child sexuality is reiterated and shaped through binaries of open/hidden talk, public/private actions, and male/female gender norms. These binaries are also noticeable within my analytical chapters. The question is now asked: does sexuality require a definition? I argue that it does not.

3.1 Does sexuality require a definition?

Butler (1992) exposes the complexity of the relationship between sex and sexuality. She claims:

If sexuality takes sex as its instrument and object, then sexuality is by definition more diffuse and less uniform than the category of sex ...

Sexuality will always exceed sex, even as sex sets itself up as a category that accounts for sexuality *in toto* by posturing as its primary cause.

(Butler, 1992, p. 356)

All explanations of how the relationship works are difficult to define with certainty. A number of definitions of sexuality, many of which use biological and humanistic essentialist frameworks, have sought to define what has been found to be a slippery term (Bristow, 1997; Freud, 1905/2000; S. Jackson & Scott, 2010).

For Robinson (2013), sexuality is constituted and regulated within binaries of heterosexuality/homosexuality and normal-natural/deviant-unnatural identities.

‘Normal’ sexuality, in Butler’s (1992) words, is exemplified as “having a true sex with a biological destiny and natural heterosexuality thus becomes essential to the aim of power, now understood as the disciplinary reproduction of life” (p. 345).

The World Health Organisation’s (WHO, 2006) ‘working’ explanation has the following definition:

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or

expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors. (p. 5)

Here the role of sexuality is explicit, but S. Jackson and Scott (2010) argue for a more dynamic theorising of sexuality, rather than constructing a definitive theory. In doing so, they foreground sexuality's fluid and unfixed meaning as "...sexuality is constantly, reflexively, modified throughout our lives" (S. Jackson & Scott, 2010, p. 14). Frayser (2003), adopting an anthropological approach, describes sexuality as a series of 'cultural maps'. She claims a shift in these maps that moved from reproductive to relational and recreational understandings. Frayser (2003) further states that "[a]n expanded view of sexuality has meant an expanded interpretation of what is sexual; sexual activity is not synonymous with intercourse. Words, looks, touches, pictures, and movements can all be construed in sexual ways" (p. 267). Frayser's expanded view is relevant to a study of child sexuality in the twenty-first century when various activities of children are construed in sexual ways.

These descriptions show that it is not necessary, or perhaps even feasible, to construct a definition of sexuality for this study. There are a number of "definitional difficulties and conceptual slippages" (S. Jackson & Scott, 2010, p. 82) that need to be taken into consideration. Awareness of the variety of ways sexuality can be understood within various cultures and specific discipline areas is useful when approaching the subject, and Weeks (2017) refers to sexuality as a "subject in constant flux" (p. 22). However, rather than relying on one cultural perspective or professional discipline to produce a working definition for this thesis, I think it is useful to hold onto key aspects of these definitions, but not be

limited to any one of them in particular. I now give an account of how sexuality has internationally and within Aotearoa New Zealand been dominated culturally by Western and Christian colonisation. I then show how sexuality has been theorised using biological and gendered notions to position various ideas of sexuality as natural and normal.

3.2 Cultural perspectives on sexuality

In his work on sexuality, Foucault refers to “two great procedures for producing the truth of sex” (1978/1990, p. 57). These include, in the West, *scientia sexualis*, and in the East, *ars erotica* (1978/1990, p. 57). The dominant ‘procedure’ in the context of this research project is that of sex/sexuality within the domain of Western science and through the influence of Christian morality. This project explores practices of sex discourse that requires sex to be spoken about, as in the procedure of *scientia sexualis*. Butler (1992) notes that, “sexuality will always exceed sex” (p. 356). I therefore use the phrase ‘sex/sexuality’ in this thesis to indicate uncertainty about whether sexuality means sex, or sex means sexuality. Some cultural perspectives of sexuality and childhood outside the West appear to link to ideas and practices connected with Christianity and colonialism (see Francoeur, 1990). These appear largely due to religious cultural histories (e.g., for Islam, see Tabatabaie, 2015a, 2015b; and for Judaism, see Brod, 1994; Hayes, 2007; Memmi, 1956).

Albert Memmi’s (1956) *The pillar of salt*, included ideas of Jewish and Islamic sexuality in childhood. Hayes (2007) reflected on Memmi’s novel as a place through which the penis locates specific knowing – from circumcision of being (Jewish) male, of difference with other Mediterranean males, and of sexual

knowing. Drawn into playful games between men and boys, that focus on the penis and questioning its circumcision, and between boys and boys, Memmi's (1956) novel, and Hayes' (2007) queering commentary, revealed an embodied knowing of sexual pleasure for children that stands apart from dominant notions of Jewish sexuality and of childhood sexuality. While Memmi's work is located in a political stance on Judaism, discursive practices around sexuality disclose ideas of masculinity and male sexual pleasure within childhood.

Other cultures had very different practices that would be transgressive to current social norms in a country like Aotearoa New Zealand. Two African examples can be found in Kiragu (2013) and Nkosi (2015). Historical practices within Māori and Pasifika cultures are relevant to acknowledge in this study, to also speak to the diversity of cultural and national groups in Aotearoa New Zealand society.

Different cultural understandings of sexuality and childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand have been subjugated by the colonising effects of politics, religion and science. Aspin and Hutchings (2007) establish in their research that, "Historically, Māori society was based on sexual diversity and acceptance of difference" (p. 415). Others understand that diversity and inclusion of multiple sexualities existed in pre-colonial Māori society (Kerekere, 2017; Te Awekotuku, 1993, 2003; Wall, 2007). British/European and Christian colonisation had effects for Māori and Pasifika cultures and their practices of sexuality (Aspin & Hutchings, 2006, 2007; Fitzpatrick, 2015). Buck (1950) writes about how Māori society "paid little attention to nudity among children until the growth of the pubic hair" (p. 364), and that matters of sex and sexuality were discussed openly, "without the pruriency which accompanies such topics among more cultured

people” (p. 364). Drawing on Aspin and Hutchings’ (2007) work, Fitzpatrick (2015) further notes that, “rationalist approaches to sexuality were imposed on Māori in New Zealand via colonisation and in line with Christian traditions; the same can be said for the experience of various Pasifika peoples” (p. 121) and, that “prior to colonisation, Māori notions of sexuality were not predicated on current norms” (p. 121). Kerekere (2017) and Te Awekotuku (2001) also argue that recent notions of Māori sexuality are shaped and reshaped by colonisers and missionaries.

Pacific people had a history of diversity and openness, and ideas of sexuality were not closed to same-sex or aged prohibitions (Fitzpatrick, 2015). Colonisation has affected Pasifika cultures regarding sexual diversity and children’s access to knowledge. Dominant views about sexuality are located in religious, cultural, scientific and gendered contexts, positioning sexuality primarily within adulthood and masculinity, and sex for procreation. Similar findings are reported about Māori approaches to childhood and the effects of colonisation on child-rearing and parenting practices, and effects on education practices (see Selby, 1999). In Māori culture, childhood was not divided up as in Western concepts of development (see Metge, 1995). Discourses that shaped practices of a colonised childhood and colonised sexuality have altered Māori and Pasifika cultural childhoods and sexualities.

This chapter focusses more on the threads of Western notions of childhood and sexuality as they have constituted children’s sexual subjectivities in Aotearoa New Zealand. In doing so, indigenous and other cultural knowledges are not excluded *per se*, but further information is not included in detail due to the size and limitations of this project. The particular approaches of *scientia sexualis* that

relate to this project are now presented as Western theories of sexuality, utilising science, psychoanalysis and commerce. These are then further located within class, race and gender practices of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity.

3.3 Sexological, psychoanalytical and social theories of sexuality

Sexuality as science: Sexological types

The term sexology describes a scientific/medicalised approach to theorising sexuality for the purposes of prescribing “the name and nature of diverse desires and sexual types” (Bristow, 1997, p. 6). This ‘cataloguing of types’ method of studying sex was utilised to firstly study male sexual behaviour (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948), then female sexual behaviour (Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953), and finally the sexual responses of women and men during sexual intercourse (Masters & Johnson, 1966). This approach was credited with researching behavioural experiences of a sexual nature. However, little was found about the meaning of these experiences for the individuals who were engaging in these behaviours. As Bristow (1997) concludes, “sexology unfortunately has limited explanatory power when investigating all the different sexual identities and behaviours it seeks to evaluate” (p. 7).

Sexological research also categorised sexuality in children. Kinsey interviewed pre-pubescent children about their sexual knowledge and experience but due to political opposition (see Bancroft, 2004) these data were not published until 1969 (Elias and Gebhard, 1969). Elias and Gebhard (1969) note particular differences about gender, socioeconomic and ethnic groups related to

masturbation, sexual knowledge, and nudity. Child sexual research, called ‘pediatric sexology’ (Money, 1990a, 1990b), was positioned as medical research and aimed to address “the sexual problems of children and adolescents” (Mazur, 1994/2013, p. 110), for example, hypermasturbation or gender disorders. Key twentieth century instigators of pediatric sexology include Albert Moll in Germany and Robert Wilson in the USA, both in the 1910s, and John Money in 1990s USA. Moll (1909/1912) initially aimed to improve children’s ‘sex-hygiene’, using procedures that were “identical with those which are recommended for the treatment of masturbation” (Moll, 1909/1912, p. 306). Wilson writes about a “hygiene of mind and body” (R. N. Wilson, 1913, p. 4) for boys, and claims that pediatric sexology sought to support “sex health obtained and insured through the prevention of ignorance regarding the normal sexual functions” (1913, p. 7). This approach to sexuality was later described as sexual health and included a medically-focussed response to physiological pathologies, such as genital birth defects (Money, 1990a, 1990b). These efforts at classification of types resulted in a range of behaviours being recorded, called ‘perversions’, including categories of gender differentiation, gender identity and sexual orientation (Moll, 1909/1912; Money, 1990b). This biological scientific approach was taken in order to provide helpful information for children and parents and, as Money (1990a) declares, to dispel a “false doctrine that degeneracy is caught by social contagion [and] that children copy and experiment with anything and everything sexual to which they are exposed” (p. 6). Surprisingly, given Moll’s (1909/1912) support against masturbation in childhood and ideas of “hereditary taint” (Money, 1990a, p. 5), Moll appears open to a child’s curiosity. He warns adults that they,

are far too ready to interpret the actions of children in the light of their own feelings – a mistake which cannot be too strongly condemned... That which is immoral in the adult is not necessarily immoral in the child, who is merely led by curiosity, and by his astonishment at the changes taking place in his [sic] body. (Moll, 1909/1912, p. 212)

The ramifications of early paediatric sexological approaches, including ideas about normal and abnormal childhood sexual interest and behaviour (for example in sex and masturbation) continue within more recent paediatric research (see studies by Friedrich, Grambsch, Damon et al., 1992; Friedrich et al., 2001; Money, 1990a, 1990b). This construction of sexuality, often viewed as a ‘natural’ part of the human condition, continues to draw on the science of physiology and biology, and claims universal truth for the validity of this knowledge based on that body of scientific evidence. Psychoanalytic approaches to sexuality, on the other hand, draw on a different form of biology to explain sexual ‘naturalness’ and ‘normality’, that of human sexual drives as instinct.

Sexuality as instinct: The importance of psychoanalytic drives

The work of Freud on ‘infantile sexuality’ and, to a lesser extent, of Lacan on ‘the phallic order’ are central to the idea of a psychoanalytic approach to theorising sexuality. Psychoanalytical approaches that apply to theories of childhood sexuality include Freud’s (1905/2000) Oedipal, castration and penis-envy ideas, and Lacan’s ideas of a symbolic power of the phallus as “the primary symbol of cultural authority” (Bristow, 1997, p. 8) of sexuality. For the purpose of this section, only Freud is included, because his ideas are embedded in the sexuality discourses that emerged within participants’ talk in this study.

Freud's work was seminal in opening up the area of sexuality in childhood to examination and study. He claims that "the popular view of the sexual instinct is that it is absent in childhood and only awakens in ... puberty" (Freud, 1905/2000, p. 39) is completely unfounded. For Freud, this thinking about childhood sexuality is "not merely a simple error but one that has grave consequences" (1905/2000, p. 39). He considers that, "the essential characters of the sexual instinct" (p. 39) in children are revealed through the course of natural development. Thus sexual experience and pleasure are a normal part of child development, specifically connected to thumb-sucking (oral), control and release of the sphincter muscle (anal), and genital stimulation (phallic and Oedipal). As Marcus (1975) comments, "no one before [Freud] had unequivocally recognized the pleasure seeking activities of infancy and childhood as both sexual and normal" (p. xlvi). This is important to note, as any focus on children's sexual experiences and activities prior to that point was designed to primarily explore that which was designated as "pathological, abnormal, and deplorable" (Marcus, 1975, p. xlvi). Children's sexual behaviour was commonly viewed as unnatural at that time.

Sexuality research was largely informed by psychoanalysis until the 1960s (S. Jackson & Scott, 2010) illuminating "how the psyche organizes the sexual drives, often in socially rebellious ways" (Bristow, 1997, p. 61). Psychoanalytic theory focussed on male sexuality as normative, deriving ideas of femininity in relation to masculinity since, "Primacy is attributed to the masculine trend in development" (Money, 1986, p. 531). Knowledge of male and female sex and sexuality, of sexual satisfaction and pleasure, gained traction within a commercial setting.

Sexuality as commerce: Libidinal economies

Recognising sexuality/sex as a pleasurable activity, in which men and women equally could engage, enabled new perceptions of sexuality/sex as a flourishing commercial proposition (Seidman, 2003). Nineteenth century Marxist approaches focused on “consumer capitalism, [which] brought sexuality into the public world of commerce” (Seidman, 2003, p. 16) during Victorian times. Through increasing sales of sexual gratification (prostitution) and sexually stimulating material (pornography), profiteering brought capitalism and business ethos into practices related to sex, and these developed further in the twentieth century. Monetary value is placed on sex and sexual fantasies through literature, personal services, and via virtual means over the internet. Consumer capitalism’s promotion of “sex as natural, brings sex into the public arena, creates new sex industries, and champions sexual choice and pleasure” (Seidman, 2003, p. 18). More recently, the location of sexuality and pornography, as a consumer experience focussing on pleasure, is described as a “‘consumer sexuality’ perspective” (Scoats, Joseph & Anderson, 2018, p. 34). Inevitably, seeking and purchasing of individual sexual pleasure leads to a blending of the commercial use of sexuality/sex and childhood.

In New Zealand, a decade ago, one example of commercial use of sexuality/sex was captured in a television advertisement. The advertisement for a motor vehicle involved a boy asking his father, “Dad, where did I come from?” The advertisement used visual imagery of local objects and events to portray a masculine perspective of sexual intercourse (see “New Lancer. New Life”, 2007). According to Macleod (2008), Toyota’s “television commercial [was] full of sexual inuendo [sic]” (n. p.). While humour was used in selling this product (a

car), commercialisation and profiteering of sexuality and childhood also has a dark and sinister side in the trafficking of children for sex (Thorburn & de Haan, 2014), where children are subjugated as products. Thorburn and de Haan (2014) researched and documented “the purchasing of sexual services by adults from children” (p. 14) within New Zealand. Further subjection of children as sexual objects occurs within trade of online child pornography (Jewkes & Andrews, 2007). In research about sexuality and childhood, realities of both legal and illegal commercial interest are possible within child sexuality discourse.

3.4 Contributions to sexuality: Feminist perspectives and constructions of masculinity

Feminist theorising about sexualities

Ideas about sexuality that emerge from feminist views of sexuality in the 1970s further influence the way sexuality/sex is viewed. Feminism itself has different understandings about what this changed view contains. From the 1970s, feminist perspectives challenged a masculine-gendered dominance of penis-centred theorising of sexuality. Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous, among others, critiqued the structures of psychoanalytic phallocentrism (see Bristow, 1997; S. Jackson & Scott, 2010; Seidman, 2003). Newer psychoanalytic theorising of sexuality included feminist concepts of desire and women’s experiences that contrasted with previous notions of dominant masculinity focusing on male satisfaction (Bristow, 1997). These ideas instigated changes in how sexuality was then constructed in the twentieth century. Sexuality became gendered, and the meaning of particular experiences within the framework of the term became more flexible.

The relevance of feminist psychoanalytic critique to this project is its place in challenging patriarchal/male-dominant perceptions of what was regarded as normal sexual development. This change expanded the possibilities of meanings of experiences related to sex and sexuality.

Feminist psychoanalysis also questioned assumptions about male sexuality, which sexological research had sustained without awareness of the political and gendered contexts of their science. MacKinnon (1992) challenges the power of foregrounding a masculine-dominated history of sexuality:

This history [of sexuality] – as defined by Freud and his successors, who see sexuality as a fundamental motive force in history; as pursued by Foucault and his followers, who see sexuality as socially constructed out of disciplinary power and discourses of knowledge – this history has been the history of pleasure and seeking it, of repression and depressing it.

(MacKinnon, 1992, p. 117)

Feminist views of sexuality include that it is no longer about male satisfaction, but remains within the domain of adult pleasure. For Chodorow (1978), this difference includes women being said to connect sex as a means of communication with intimacy while men approach sex as a means of giving and receiving erotic pleasure or orgasmic satisfaction. MacKinnon (1992), however, regards sexuality as a key example of a history of inequality between men and women. For MacKinnon (1992), gender is a division of power, while “sexuality...is a dynamic in that” (p. 132). Before examining poststructuralist theorising, and in particular feminist poststructuralist theorising of power/knowledge in sexuality and child sexuality, masculine-dominated constructions of sexuality are examined.

Masculine constructions of sexuality

Masculinity exists, according to Connell (2005), only in contrast to ‘femininity’, locating its function in this research as a site of gendered and sexed power relations. Examining masculinity offers a further perspective in deconstructing notions of sexuality and gender. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005),

Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting. (p. 836)

Connell (2005) defines normative masculinity as “what men ought to be” (p. 70). The ‘conventional markers’ of masculinity located in male bodies are “muscles, movement, repressed emotional states and academic achievement” (Star, 1999, p. 38). Dominant masculinity is largely portrayed as hegemonic, a unitary, singular, biological, and natural concept (Hearn, 1996). This notion of biological determinism also reduces or removes responsibility for male behaviour, since this is rationalised as natural (Wardman, 2017). It is misogynistic and focusses on men’s pleasure through sexual satisfaction (see, e.g., Stoltenberg, 1990). Ideas of masculinity reproduce patriarchal culture, support gendered power relations, and construct a dominant male sexuality as heterosexual and homophobic. Patriarchal masculinity, states Pease (1997), must be viewed within social contexts, such as class (e.g., working-class brawn compared to middle-class brain). A further social location is ‘schooling’ which, it is argued, operates as a particular site for the construction of masculinities (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Sexton, 2015), gender (B. Davies, 1993), heteronormativity (Smith & Gunn, 2015) and sexuality (K.J.

Burke, 2011). Hokowhitu (2007) introduces culture/race and the effects of colonisation within understandings of masculinity in this country. A specific view of masculinities in Aotearoa New Zealand is presented further below.

Questioning the unitary notion of masculinity, Connell³ (1995) argues for understanding the complexities in which multiple ‘masculinities’ are produced. Claiming that “masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations” (p. 44), Connell explores some masculinities as potentially “complicit” with hegemonic masculinity, and others as “subordinated and marginalized” (p. 181). Connell’s theorising provides for a fluid and conflictual gender relations rather than an essentialised masculinity (Connell, 2002). Furthermore, any understanding of masculinities and gender, concerns bodies and social norms. That is, bodies “become part of the language through which gender is written and read” (K. J. Burke, 2011, p. 23) and “also made male” (p. 24) through multiple social discourses on masculinity. K. J. Burke (2011), in research on the construction of masculinity within an all-boys Catholic school, highlights how the sexed and gendered body “is very much affected by the educational world it inhabits” (p. 24). Drawing on a number of writers, K. J. Burke outlines how “schools...come to define and (attempt to) restrict sexualities through the normalization and discipline of the body” (p. 33). He connects research that reports on how schools act as instruments of normalisation in the policing of children’s (racial) bodies (see Ferguson, 2001); on the surveillance of (classed) boys’ bodies and how schooling is ‘a masculinizing agency’ (see Mac an Ghail,

³ Following K. J. Burke (2011), I acknowledge R. W. Connell (Australian sociologist) “whose texts referred to were written by [Bob] Connell-marked-male [and is] now female-identified gender scholar, [Raewyn] R. W. Connell” (p. 43).

1994); and where adults take control or lack control in presenting the cultural messages about ‘the appropriate male’ (see Harris, 1995).

Not only is class a feature of Mac an Ghaill’s (1994) work, but he identifies “the public and private dichotomy of... boys learning to be men, while policing sex/gender boundaries” (p. 109). Mac an Ghaill refers to “the three cultural interconnected constitutive elements of compulsory heterosexuality, misogyny and homophobia” (p. 109). Schools are spaces in which masculinities are constructed according to dominant cultural social norms. The practices of construction are further identified in Haywood and Mac an Ghaill’s (1996, 2001) deconstruction of schooling as a specific site for ‘making men’, describing schools as “masculinity-making devices” (1996, p. 59) where ‘real boys’ oppose the feminine and feminised versions of masculinity (2001). They identify particular practices that reiterate and ‘school’ (i.e., teach) masculinities (1996). These include the curriculum, teacher culture and discipline, through which “teacher relations reinforce ‘normal’ masculinity” (1996, p. 54), which they later refer to as “remasculinizing” (2001, p. 27). Wardman (2017) maintains that biological determinism and peer pressure continue in schools so that “performances of dominant masculinity are accepted as a social norm to the point where many boys experience peer pressure to prove their masculinity” (p. 809). Another practice identified by Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) is competition and abusive language within student to student peer relations. An associated peer relations practice developed in recent years is sexual communication (e.g., sexting) using mobile and online communication (Harvey & Ringrose, 2015).

Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) build on feminist and queer scholarship, arguing for a critical examination of “heterosexual masculinities...to

destabilize the assumed naturalness and inevitability of sex/gender schooling regimes” (p. 59). In her research, B. Davies (1993) also argues that, at primary school, young boys learn how to be heterosexual men, and A. Taylor (2013b) claims that early childhood education is also “a key training ground for conformity and compliance through the introduction of social norms and the encouragement of self-regulating behaviours” (p. 197). Town (1999) identifies particular ‘silences’ about sexuality at school as a key heteronormative practice that maintains and represents hegemonic masculinities in school. Blaise (2010) identifies two specific silences in her research with young children: same-gender desire and non-normative gender behaviours. This, she states, “indicates that children know a lot about heterosexuality and romance, and about how femininities and masculinities are constructed through relationships, as well as how desire plays a part in constructing normative understandings of sexuality” (Blaise, 2010, p. 7). Foucault’s (1978/1990) “general and studied silence” (p. 4) notes the repression of talking about children’s sexuality, claiming that “the pedagogical institution has imposed a ponderous silence on the sex of children” (p. 29). These ‘silences’ are linked, since they both sustain ideas of ‘children having no sex’ (Foucault, 1978/1990) and the dominance of heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity (Town, 1999).

Considering ideas of masculinity for this project also requires understanding the particular cultural and racial histories within social constructions of men and gender and sexuality in Aotearoa New Zealand (e.g., Gunn & Smith, 2015). One cultural image of masculinity in New Zealand is “the Kiwi bloke” (Law, Campbell, & Schick, 1999, p. 15), which Bannister (2007) describes as “based around white males, [who] generally valued toughness,

rawness and spontaneity, was generally anti-intellectual, and was intolerant of effeminacy” (p. 7). This culture is reiterated by popular humanist writing that refers to ‘being a real man’ or ‘becoming more of a man’ within such books as *He’ll be okay: Growing gorgeous boys into good men* (Lashlie, 2005), and the Australian title, *Manhood: An action plan for changing men’s lives* (Biddulph, 1995), and explored critically in *Big boys don’t cry* (Donnelly, 1978). Furthermore, as Hokowhitu (2007) argues, Māori masculinity is negatively portrayed by “colonial social construction” (p. 63). Māori masculinity is racially constructed as humble and violent. “It is not surprising”, continues Hokowhitu, “that the dominant constructions of Māori masculinity do not include the talkative, flamboyant, creative, feminine and deeply humorous performances of masculinity by Māori men” (Hokowhitu, 2007, p. 74).

Notions of masculinity are critical to this research, since social constructions of masculinities are sexed and gendered, shaping of practices that discipline bodies, and constitutive of sexual and childhood subjectivities. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) cite Brod’s (1994) warning that analysing masculinities should not be a separate sphere “as if women were not a relevant part of the analysis...[but]...in taking a consistently relational approach to gender” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 837). So too, schools are particular sites, according to this research, where dominant heterosexual and homophobic masculinities are constructed as normative, and may result in sexist and misogynist masculinities. Within a school context in Aotearoa New Zealand, Fitzpatrick (2013) reports on the production of young people’s normative ideas of masculinity and gender. However, Nielsen and B. Davies (2017) conclude:

There is today more emphasis on the complexity, ambivalence, and multiplicity of masculinities and femininities among and within individuals, resulting in an array of different and mobile, *but still also hierarchically ordered* [emphasis added], forms of masculinities and femininities. (p. 141)

I now focus specifically on sexuality as discourse, developing a poststructuralist understanding of how sexuality is theorised and constituted as power/knowledge.

3.5 Sexuality as discourse

It is Foucault (1978/1990) who problematises the concept of “sexuality as an effect of power” (S. Jackson & Scott, 2010, p. 17), viewing the term as an aggregate of discursive desires that focusses on bodies and exclusions (Bristow, 1997).

...sexuality is not, in relation to power, an exterior domain to which power is applied ... on the contrary it is a result and an instrument of power's designs... (Foucault, 1978/1990, p.152)

Furthermore, Foucault distinguishes that,

...”sex” is historically subordinate to sexuality. We must not place sex on the side of reality, and sexuality on that of confused ideas and illusions; sexuality is a very real historical formation; it is what gave rise to the notion of sex, as a speculative element necessary to its operation.
(Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 157)

This thesis is immersed in Foucault's (1978/1990) ‘view’ on power/knowledge. For Foucault, “power and sexuality are closely entwined with each other, since power produces sexuality and gives it meaning” (Hunt, 1992, p. 83). Foucault

(1978/1990) locates the force of power relations within discursive practices of speech and language. Speech acts are performatives that form and reiterate real-time expressions of sex/gender/sexuality. Foucault's (1997/2003) notion of sexuality also encompasses the "precise point where the disciplinary and the regulatory, the body and the population, are articulated" (p. 252). Here, sexuality becomes "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power" (1978/1990, p. 103) within these articulations. Foucault refrains from a single definition, as "there is no single, all-encompassing strategy, valid for all of society and uniformly bearing on all manifestations of sex" (1978/1990, p. 103). Instead he names six 'relations of power' strategies that are manifest when a real time instantiation of sex/sexuality becomes visible. These include: reproductive function; sexuality/sex in "its heterosexual and adult form"; marriage; the politics of two sexes; age; and social class. These instantiations of sex/sexuality achieve specific force in relations for children, through developmental and gender performatives, reiterated as 'appropriate' and normal, and where sexuality is constructed "as a special area of life and the child as a special category of person" (S. Jackson & Scott, 2015, p. 39). Simultaneously, adult subjectivities are produced through these same performatives since parents and teachers repeat specific scripts that produce them as gendered and sexed and adult.

Foucault asks a number of questions about the "incitement" of the discourse of sex, in the face of attempts to repress and restrict the "will to knowledge" aspect of talk of sex/sexuality in particular. These include:

What were the effects of power generated by what was said? What are the links between these discourses, these effects of power, and the pleasures

that were invested by them? What knowledge (savoir) was formed as a result of this linkage? (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 11)

These questions serve to focus how sexuality can be interrogated as a powerful regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains particular childhood sexuality discourses.

Robinson (2008) identifies this theme when she states that “Foucault pointed out that the repressive discourses that were taken up around sexuality in the Victorian era only intensified the focus on the sexual” (p. 117). She then directly quotes Foucault as to the effects of this focus.

The power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, caressing them with its eyes, intensifying areas, electrifying surfaces, dramatizing troubled moments. It wrapped the sexual body in its embrace. There was undoubtedly an increase in effectiveness and an extension of the domain controlled; but also a sensualization of power and a gain of pleasure. (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 44)

These ‘focussing on the sexual’ repressive discourses produce social and individual effects of bio-power for differing populations of adults and children. Shaped within practices of gender, class and age, the bodies of men and women, boys and girls, are subjected to social norms of masculinity and femininity, adulthood and childhood. These practices are reiterated in language and action. These regimes of power-knowledge-pleasure therefore produce child bodies and adult bodies that are disciplined by age and sex-knowledge.

Beyond the practices of bio-power, Foucault’s study on sexuality also includes investigating “how individuals were led to practice, on themselves and on others, a hermeneutics of desire, a hermeneutics of which their behavior was

doubtless the occasion, but certainly not the exclusive domain” (1985/1990, p. 5).

This practice of disciplining the individual body can be seen particularly in the ways that the family is constructed as the site of power relations for ‘the deployment of sexuality’. Within the family, power is developed “along its two primary dimensions: the husband-wife axis and the parents-children axis”

(Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 108). Through the family, social norms are reproduced in the practices of individuals as ‘husbands’ and ‘wives’, and as ‘parents’, in creating and recreating heteronormative sexuality, and in ideas of ‘childhood’ that are steeped in heteronormativity and supposed ignorance of sex/sexuality knowledge.

While predominantly focussed on (male) adult sexuality, Foucault’s study nonetheless raises questions that are useful to this study, about sexuality for adults and children, males and females, and of deconstructing ideas of children’s knowledge about sexual reproduction and pleasure. Foucault’s ideas on desire and pleasure can offer a significant lens through which to examine language regarding notions of sexual pleasure in the lives of children. Describing sex as “the ‘code’ of pleasure” (1980b, p. 191), Foucault understands that the Western world has systematised pleasure “according to the ‘laws’ of sex [giving] rise to the whole apparatus of sexuality” (p. 191). The transgressive notion that children may be sexual beings (“Everyone knew...that children had no sex”: Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 4) disturbs many parents’ and teachers’ ideas about childhood and sexuality. This study investigates the locus of power-knowledge-pleasure in participants’ talk.

Discursive formations around sexuality

This section orients an approach to deconstructing sexuality for the “multiple and mobile field of force relations, wherein far-reaching...effects of domination are produced” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 102). It considers sexuality as discourse, as including “material verbal traces left by history” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 133) and as a site for the transmission and production of power (Foucault, 1978/1990).

However, it is important to note that, within this location of power relations, “there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 102). That is, while dominant practices in discourse exist, they are not the only practices. Therefore, analysis of text can be open to different “levels of their tactical productivity” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 102).

Foucault’s work is important for this thesis as he identifies the point at which the child’s body becomes the site for observation and regulation of sexuality. The particular ‘struggle’ he identifies is children’s masturbation, that is, boys’ masturbation. Following this, Foucault shows how “sexuality, through thus becoming an object of analysis and concern, surveillance and control, engenders at the same time an intensification of each individual’s desire, for, in and over his body” (Foucault, 1980c, pp. 56-57). Parental surveillance of this behaviour produces conflict for parents and children and the site of this conflict is children and their actions. In this way, “the body thus became the issue of conflict between parents and children, the child and instances of control” (p. 57). Parent-child conflict over struggles about sexuality now includes a wider range of actions beyond masturbation. These ‘struggles’ may include nudity, sharing baths, kissing, sex-talk and sexting, among others. Some of these elements are

deconstructed within this thesis for the power relations at force. Here, sexuality can be viewed as a central system of control that is analysed, since gender, age, class and race also intersect with cultural and historical notions of sexuality. In Weedon's (1997) words, "[s]exuality is seen as a primary locus of power in contemporary society, constituting subjects and governing them by exercising control through their bodies" (p. 115).

A growing number of researchers use analyses of power and gender to specifically explore historical and cultural backgrounds of childhood sexuality, predominantly within Western contexts (e.g., Blaise, 2009; Egan & Hawkes, 2008; Surtees, 2005). This is where this thesis is sited, as a study of disciplinary power and discourses of knowledge in childhood sexuality. To examine disciplinary power in sexuality involves exploration of developmental and biological determinism, gender and bio-politics.

Determinism as regulation of subjectivities and sexuality

Within a biological and developmental deterministic theoretical framework, children are viewed as immature human beings (Prout & James, 2015), or as Foucault (1978/1990) states, "children were defined as 'preliminary' sexual beings" (p. 104). Seen in this way, it becomes a matter of necessity to withhold information about sex/sexuality until a certain level of maturity, deemed appropriate, is reached. At this 'appropriate' time, sex-knowledge can be made available to children. However, ideas about what time might be the best or 'appropriate' time for information to be given can differ between families and cultural groups. Within a Foucauldian view, keeping knowledge of sex from children, such as holding secrets about reproduction and pleasure, and keeping

children ignorant, become enshrined in practices that regulate the knowledge children are permitted access to. “Everyone knew,” wrote Foucault (1978/1990),

that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one’s eyes and stopped one’s ears whenever they came to show evidence to the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed. (p. 4)

The totalising possibilities of these deployments of sex/sexuality in regulating the sexual subjectivities of children also hides other socially uncomfortable views of childhood. In the regulation of childhood, children’s subjectivities are constituted through multiple discourses (Philo, 2011), such as delinquency (Foucault, 1975/1977), madness and idiocy (Foucault, 1997/2003, 2006), and “little monsters” (for example, the masturbating child: Foucault, 2016). Adult responses to the possibility of children’s excesses (in sexuality and other aspects of behaviour) sees the specific mechanism of governmentality utilised as a pedagogisation of children’s sex. Foucault (1978/1990) views this as,

a double assertion that practically all children indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity; and that, being unwarranted, at the same time ‘natural’ and ‘contrary to nature,’ this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers. (p. 104)

Within cultural and historical settings, that also see the policing of adult sexual activity (with regard to public displays of sex, of prostitution, and particularly of masturbation), the sites of the family and childhood are recognised as critical for shaping the behaviours of adults to come. Ideas of moral hygiene take shape, since, “this pedagogization was especially evident in the war against onanism, which in the West lasted nearly two centuries” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 104).

Deterministic notions of sex and performatives of sex and gender are connected through ideas of biology and what is 'natural'. This determination differs from gender discourse and how 'gender' applies tactical effects in disciplining and governing children's sexuality.

Gender power/knowledge relations within sex/sexuality

Butler (1990) argues that, "the only sanctioned sex is the masculine one... [and that] if the coherent subject is always sexed as masculine, then it is constructed through the abjection and erasure of the feminine" (p. 353). In this view, constructions of sexuality clearly engage with constructions of gender, and Butler examines this area within the heterosexual matrix (see Chapter 2). This project takes up Butler's (1990, 1999) use of 'gender/sexuality' as inseparable.

Although Foucault's work on sexuality is written from a male point of view, "his focus on the body as the site for the deployment of discourses...opened the way for consideration of the gendering of subjectivity" (Hunt, 1992, p. 81). However, MacKinnon (1992), in her critique of Foucault, argues that his inattention to gender sustains sexuality as "a set of practices that inscribes gender as unequal in social life" (p. 126). This critique throws open the idea that analysing relations of power in the gendered body is critical to any study on sexuality, including the present project.

Foucault (1978/1990) refers to particular sexually-related discursive practices that emerged from the seventeenth century and have structured human lives as heteronormatively gendered, and increasingly as constructed within an adult-child binary. For Foucault, these disciplinary practices and the regulatory controls they deploy govern notions of sex/sexuality in childhood and adulthood.

Biological and developmental discourses gained traction as regimes of truth. In turn, these regimes, according to Robinson (2013), “classify, discipline, normalize and produce what it means to be a child, and, in addition, what it means to be an adult, a good parent, and a good normative adult citizen-subject” (p. 6).

Furthermore, biological and developmental discourses not only sustain a sense of innocence but also differentiate between boys and girls (Renold, 2000). One effect of differentiation is the shaping, over time, of a gendered heteronormative performance of sex/sexuality as ‘girl’ or ‘boy’, with children labelled boys/male being judged as more ready to be told about sex than girls, and boys being given different accounts of sex/sexuality than girls. This form of differentiation is seen in Robinson’s (2000) example of how gendered authority between male students and female teachers is deployed in a school setting. In her study, Robinson found that “boys from a very early age are aware that accessing hegemonic masculinity privileges them to certain resources and institutionalised power that neither girls nor women will equally share in particular contexts” (Robinson, 2000, p. 88).

Other examples reveal instances where young female sexuality is equated with ideas of excess (see McLelland & Hunter, 2013) rather than viewed as developmental sexual experience. Sexual experience is often afforded within a hegemonic masculinity to the notion of boys becoming men. Language about young people’s sexuality (e.g., ‘slut’ compared to ‘stud’) can disclose this gendered differentiation.

These ideas highlight tensions in discourses reflecting a variety of binary positions. These positions include pairings consisting of, for example, adult/child, male/female, father/mother, strong/weak, dominant/submissive, normal/deviant, appropriate/inappropriate, playful/harmful (Knights & Kerfoot, 2004). The power

effects of these constructions comprise one of the binary pair taking up a dominant, hierarchical position over the other (Bird, 2004); secondly, each aspect of the binary needs the other for validation; thirdly, one is favoured and/or accepted as truthful or as more accurate while the other is negated; lastly, little or no acknowledgment is given to the space(s) in between (Arber, 2000). That is, in a binary, the construction is seen as a hierarchy where one is acceptable and the other is not. It is not presented as a continuum of possible positions that may be equally valid or offer an accessible range of experiences to reflect upon as moments of learning and identity. A deconstruction of the gender binary can be seen in Ehrensaft's (2014) observation that, "the concept of the gender binary has been replaced in recent thinking by the concept of a gender spectrum" (p. 575). This observation allows for new possibilities to emerge, so that rather than an either/or binary, there is a negotiation of diverse positions made possible.

As well as relations of power, political purposes in discursive practices, regarding notions of development and gender, also govern sex/sexuality in the lives of individuals and society.

Biopolitics: Disciplining the sexual child, regulating child sexuality

Foucault recognises that the political governance of a population's health includes the regulation of sex and sexuality in the realms of personal and moral hygiene and the imposition of specific standards of sexual and reproductive health in people's lives. He claims:

[S]ex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their

materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures. (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 155)

Foucault recognises how the power effects of ‘sensation and pleasure’ at an individual level could be harnessed by governance forces. He argues that sexuality has become “a field of vital strategic importance” (Foucault, 1997/2003, p. 251), which Robinson (2012) explains has two purposes: “to regulate and discipline individuals’ sexual behaviours through constant surveillance ... and to regulate and discipline the biological processes of procreation in populations” (Robinson, 2012, pp. 261-262). The second purpose, in particular, is important. It is in these ways that sexuality, as a site of force power relations, recruits totalising procedures for disciplining “the undisciplined body [which] is open to disease and degeneracy” (Robinson, 2012, p. 262) and technologies of scientific classification and dividing practices, to regulate populations through notions of “hygiene and the medicalization of reproduction” (p. 262). Foucault (1980d) states that he believed “the political significance of the problem of sex is due to the fact that sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population” (p. 125). These technologies or practices, however, are not only directed towards adults, but the whole population, including children. Thus childhood sexuality, as a specific site of power relations, becomes regulated through effects of biopower that govern sexual power-knowledge-experience according to age, maturity and activity. These ideas are next explored within childhood.

3.5.1 Poststructuralist theorising of child sexuality/gender

Poststructuralist theorising of child sexuality/gender examines these notions of how children are positioned in relation to sex/sexuality and childhood. Childhood is presented here as a central point through which various constructions of sexuality and gender intersect. C. Davies and Robinson (2010) understand “sexuality as a historically and culturally contingent category of subjectivity and a complex signifying system founded on individual and institutional relations of power” (p. 251). They claim that the dominant childhood discourse is that “sexuality is constituted as irrelevant to young children’s lives, and yet, at the same time, a ‘danger’ to them” (p. 251). These understandings affect how children’s sexuality is constructed and understood.

Blaise (2005), Renold (2005) and Robinson (2013) utilise feminist poststructuralism and queer theory in their analysis of children’s constructions of gender, describing various ways in which children’s doing of gender “constitute themselves as girls and boys in a heterosexual world” (Blaise, 2005, p. 55). Blaise (2005) describes gender as seen in “hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity” (p. 56), where performatives of doing gender are practices of Butler’s heterosexual matrix (see Chapter 2). Children’s actions and relationships, states Blaise, are not viewed “as individual gendered boys and girls, but rather as boys and girls taking part in power relationships that were located in particular social contexts” (2005, p. 56). Blaise further identifies “these relationships as sites in which gender is constructed, reconstructed, and at times contested” (p. 56). Children are positioned within a dominant heteronormative gender discourse, where performatives of gender and sexuality are constituted through their play and language. Particular amplifications of discursive practices illuminate how

power/knowledge of sex/sexuality are deployed in children's play and language.

Egan and Hawkes (2008) explain how Foucault's work highlights that control of children's sexuality is a response to wider social issues that are targeted for regulation of populations. They claim that:

...discourses of protection and social reformation ... provides a window into how discourses about childhood sexuality were, for the most part, not really about children: rather they were emblematic of the anxieties surrounding larger social instabilities and the need to bring them under control. (Egan & Hawkes, 2008, p. 359)

Foucault (1978/1990) identifies the "pedagogization of children's sex" (p. 104) as one of the "specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex" (p.103), noting unambiguously a contradictory position of children's sexual activity as both 'natural' and 'contrary to nature'. Through this pedagogisation, "parents, families, educators, doctors, and eventually psychologists would have to take charge" (p. 104) having children under surveillance, focussing on any sexual activity, especially masturbation. A panoptic surveillance of children and childhood is encouraged by practices that examine all actions for the potential of sex/sexuality. Children's bodies are invested with the category of sex.

Sexuality as performative utterance

Who is it who invests children's bodies with the category of sex, and how does this occur? For Butler (1992), sexuality is "a regulatory regime [that] operates primarily by investing bodies with the category of sex" (p. 351). Foucault (1978/1990) writes about societal governance of bodies and sex through regulatory controls as practices of biopolitics (see Chapter 2). In children's lives,

biopolitics produces specific areas for surveillance. Gender and sexuality act together as a regulatory regime from the moment children are born and identified as girls and boys (Butler, 1990, 1999). Examples of how biopolitics act in specific ways in children's lives are examined in the next chapter (e.g., kissing, masturbation, and sex talk). Families and schools are particular locations for control in children's lives where their bodies are invested with the category of sex (Foucault, 1978/1990).

Performative language about childhood gender/sexuality, is "a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted" (Butler, 1993, p. 176). For children, this is situated within a series of binaries, as aged (non-adult/child), and as sexed/gendered (female/male). Performative childhood sexuality is reiterated within texts that proclaim 'normal' sexual interest and behaviour for children according to aged and gendered constructions (e.g., Friedrich, Grambsch, Broughton et al., 1991, Friedrich et al., 1998; Goldman & Goldman, 1982; Johnson, 1999). 'Normal' sexual behaviour is therefore reiterated as normative. Behaviour outside normative childhood gender/sexuality positions children as having 'sexual behaviour problems' (Johnson, 2002a, 2002b) and possibly requiring psychiatric or clinical intervention (Friedrich et al., 1992, 2001; Mesman, Harper, Edge, Brandt & Pemberton, 2019). They may be viewed as 'abnormal' or deviant (Shaw, 1999), resulting in effects of social and spatial isolation because their sexual/gender behaviour transgresses social norms of normative childhood. The language of normativity (and its binary opposite, abnormality) includes repetitive and reiterative chains that cite truth claims about childhood innocence and age.

Butler (1992) notes Foucault's practice of inversion, specifically his reworking the word 'sex' from a noun to a verb to shift emphasis. That is, we 'do' sex rather than we have or are a sex. Writing in the context of the life-threatening effects of sex and AIDS, Butler sees value in this linguistic shift as a way to change use and understanding of the 'sex' word. For Butler (1999), gender is also a verb, not a noun. Gender is done (and undone), that is, we 'do' gender and we can 'undo' gender. As Blaise (2010, p. 2) notes, Butler sees gender performativity as "an effect of doing gender, rather than a cause". Butler acknowledges the close connection between gender and sexuality and uses the term gender/sexuality. Butler also draws on Foucault's thinking that a descriptive claim, such as female or male, is both a "legislation and a production of bodies...that bodies become produced according to principles of heterosexualizing coherence and integrity, unproblematically as either female or male" (Butler, 1992, p. 351). The performatives of 'sex' and 'gender' repeat notions (in practices of language and action) repressing that which is not heteronormative and age-appropriate.

Citational chains (Butler, 1990; B. Davies, 2014) operate through repetition, and connect with ideas of childhood ignorance and innocence (Burman, 2008a, 2008b) through a process of reiteration. Discourses of ignorance/innocence are deployed through citational chains to reproduce particular stories about children's knowledge of sexuality (as reproduction and pleasure). Through repetition, children are positioned as ignorant and immature and therefore should not be informed or educated about human sexual reproduction and pleasure. If children display such knowledge they can be marked as 'knowing' and precocious (S. Jackson, 1990). If adults share information with children they too can be

marked for taking away a child's innocence, or sexualising children (Levine, 2002; Postman, 1985).

Butler's (1990) notion of discursive subjectification and performative utterance, and Derrida's (1967/1976) idea of "speech acts" as iterable/repetitive, enable possibilities for developing the spaces for new/different conversations to take place. Linking ideas of performativity within discourse, allows for an interrogation of how children can position and reposition themselves within binaries of age and gender. Many of the ideas introduced in Chapter 2, here become central.

Positioning theory and notions of agency

Discourse theory, together with use of positioning theory and agency (B. Davies, 1991, 1994; B. Davies & Harré, 1990), and Butler's theory of performativity (Butler, 1990, 1999) build on Foucault's (1969/1972, 1982) concept of subjective positioning, to develop the thinking that led to the notion of discursive positioning used in this thesis.

In contrast to humanist theorising, poststructuralist theories adopt a language of subjectivity and positioning in which the person is constituted through discourse (B. Davies, 1991, 1994). Within this framework, a fluidity and an uncertainty about the idea of an essential self becomes possible as a person is "...constituted through multiple discourses at any one point in time" (B. Davies, 1991, p. 47). Further, as B. Davies notes, "while we may regard a move as correct within one game or discourse, it may equally be dangerous within another" (B. Davies, 1991, p. 47). The possibilities for multiple sex/gender positionings and

subjectivities within childhood are limited by dominant social and cultural norms and reiterated heteronormative practices.

B. Davies (1994) writes about “seeing with poststructuralist eyes” (p. 26) as a way of questioning potential positions within relations between teachers and children. Holding a “tension between personal and political” (p. 35), she encourages adults to reflect on their position of power in relation to children, and to have awareness of “the powerful teacher, like the coloniser” (p. 27). In addition to child/adult positioning, B. Davies (1991) also explores gender positioning. Here she questions the possibility of agency. B. Davies’ theory, about how persons are ‘swimming’ within a range of discursive currents, is relevant to children’s and adults’ experience in relation to sexuality and gender. As B. Davies (1994) notes, regarding gender:

Through an analysis of discursive practices (that is, of the ways we each speak ourselves and each other into existence through our everyday talk), we can discover why it is that the dualistic gender order is so intractable and yet also how we might begin to dismantle it. (p. 1)

Through exploring words, actions, policies and practices, it is possible to deconstruct some of the power effects of language. Adult/child and gendered relations of power are deconstructed through applying positioning theory and notions of agency. What is ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ sexuality/gender in childhood?

3.5.2 Deconstructing ‘natural and normal’ gender/sexuality in childhood

Dominant discourses on hegemonic heteronormative gender/sexuality and childhood are clearly visible within the above sections, yet Robinson (2013) argues something different. She claims that:

Within current discourses of children’s sexuality...children’s agency as sexual subjects has either been non-existent, dismissed or minimal.

Freudian acknowledgement of children’s sexuality provided some chance of sexual agency for children, but this was short-lived, the result of a conservative backlash against permissiveness, and the hegemony of protectionist discourses that emerged during the 1980s and continue today.

(p. 110)

Historical research on childhood sexuality is located within medical and psychoanalytic paradigms, using biological and developmentalist frameworks to structure essentialist understandings of sexual development. From the work of Moll (1909/1912) and Freud (1905/2000) at the beginning of the twentieth century, through major sexological studies and including social theory, sexuality is theorised as scientifically rationalised and biologically driven (see S. Jackson & Scott, 2010; Seidman, 2003). These approaches do not attend to relations of power, particularly gender. Social constructionist theories of sexuality acknowledge that sexuality is not in itself natural or normal because of biology and physiology. Rather, sexuality is constituted through the constructions of sex and gender that are practiced within social contexts (Blaise, 2005; Egan, 2013). Notions of gender as feminine/masculine and (hetero)normative are constructed and sustained through performative practices of language and particular ways of

relating between people. Within these understandings, childhood is viewed as a time of innocence, naïvety and sexual latency (S. Jackson & Scott, 2010).

Exploring theories of sexuality makes available different perspectives with which to question sexuality in childhood outside of dominant notions. Moore and Reynolds (2018) suggest that childhood and sexuality be reconciled with attention to children's agency. Similarly, Egan and Hawkes (2009) argue for recognition of the sexual agency of children. Taking this further, Robinson (2013) recommends reconceptualising children's sexual subjectivities, arguing for the notion of sexual citizenship for the child. These concepts point toward a different language of childhood sexuality and potentially diverse constructions of children as sexual agents and sexual citizens.

Key ideas in Chapter 3

The arguments made in Chapter 3 explicitly argue for a discursive approach to deconstructing and understanding multiple meanings of sex and sexuality. Furthermore, Butler's use of 'gender/sexuality' has utility for this thesis, signifying the inseparability of sex/gender/sexuality when approaching constructions of sexuality. Taking a position within a framework of Foucauldian and feminist poststructuralist and queer theories, the effects of power relations are shown specifically within gendered constructions of sexuality. These are largely Western and gendered.

This genealogical exploration of historical and cultural notions of sexuality outlined here, lays the groundwork for an examination of the history of childhood sexuality within the Western world in Chapter 4. There, historical and cultural practices are examined that position children, and sexuality in childhood,

through disciplinary and regulatory practices within discourses on childhood, age, innocence and moral panics. This history presents archaeological threads of discursive material that construct ideas and practices of childhood and sexuality in contemporary times.

Chapter 4

Relations of power in child sexuality discourses

This chapter initially presents some examples of constructions of child sexuality, before giving a genealogical account of Western perspectives of the intersection between childhood and sexuality/gender. Chapter 3 explored theories and theorising of sexuality. This chapter begins by considering three illustrative sexual practices (kissing, masturbation and sex-talk) in childhood, in order to consider ways that sexuality discourses construct specific notions of childhood. This will help to explore connections between theories of sexuality as they intersect with notions of childhood. Using Foucault's (1978/1990) concept of problematisation, the 'problem' of childhood sexuality is explored within each of these illustrations as fluid and multiply complex. Many parents and teachers find the topic of child sexuality awkward (see Flanagan, 2010, 2011), and the specific actions of kissing, masturbation and sex-talk complicated to discuss. This complexity often translates also into how sexuality in childhood is conceptualised and theorised. The chapter then provides a genealogical approach that synthesises significant themes from historical and archaeological practices around children and sex, pinpointing contemporary discourses and analysing relations of power in childhood and sexuality. These discourses emphasise political strategies that produce a genealogy of power relations sustaining dominant heteronormative gender within the discursive practices of children's lives. This history informs and positions my reading and analysis of the findings shared by participants in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

4.1 Theorising specific practices in childhood

Kissing

Dominant heterosexual discourse might suggest that kissing is ‘natural’ (Morris, 1967, cited in S. Jackson, 1982) and a common action between people (Jankowiak, Volsche & Garcia, 2015). Questions are however asked by adults about whether children’s kissing could possibly raise concerns and if kissing holds any erotic notions. Others question whether a kiss on the cheek or lips transgress commonly accepted practices to greet, show affection, say goodbye. What might cause consternation about a kiss on the lips that is viewed as transgressing the normative in childhood? Levine (2002) and Jankowiak et al. (2015) report that kissing is not culturally universal. They did, nonetheless, cite various cultural groups that do associate kissing as a specific sexual action. *The New Zealand Herald*, running an article entitled ‘The science of kissing’, included the following paragraph:

By 2015, kisses continue to look different depending on where you are. In [some] places...both genders greet each other with a kiss on the cheek one to three times to express warmth and respect. Elsewhere...a handshake or nod is more common. Many Germans save kisses for those they are closest to, while it’s a private matter in India, Bangladesh and Thailand. In New Zealand we have the hongi⁴ and Canadian Inuits practise a kind of nuzzle-

⁴ Kirshenbaum’s reference to *hongi* suggests that this is a universal New Zealand custom without acknowledging the practice as one particular to Māori, indigenous people to Aotearoa New Zealand. Cultural, racial and colonial discourses are rendered invisible within this description. I acknowledge how Pākehā (European New Zealanders) have taken up a number of practices (words and actions) that are described as ‘Kiwi’ but have their origin from Māori culture and history.

sniff. And in Japan and China public kissing was formerly taboo, but is now increasingly common among young people. (Kirshenbaum, 2015)

Cultural practices of kissing and showing warmth and respect vary around the world. Levine (2002) cites entertainment media, in the twentieth century developed world, as a significant place of learning about kissing: “Of course ...I learned to kiss from the movies” (p. 151). Western practices of kissing, and Western meanings of kissing related to sex and sexuality, tend to dominate and colonise meanings, producing an American-inspired view where “kissing is step one of sex” (Levine, 2002, p. 8), a ‘slippery-slope’ down the road towards the promise of a ‘full’ sexual encounter. The effects of this discourse can be seen in the suggestion made by Charlotte Reznick (2009), a child psychologist in the USA, reported in *The Daily Mail*, “that parents should not kiss their children on the lips because it is too sexual” (Crane, 2015). Reznick, quoted in a parenting blog, further claims:

As a child gets to 4 or 5 or 6 and their sexual awareness comes about (and some kids have an awareness earlier -- as when we notice they start masturbating at 2 or 3 sometimes -- they just discover their private parts and it feels good), the kiss on the lips can be stimulating to them. (cited in Sager, 2010, n. p.)

A number of researchers have explored and analysed examples of children’s kissing and children’s knowledge of sexuality around kissing (Blaise, 2010, 2013; Robinson, 2013). Kissing between boys and girls is seen to be both encouraged and discouraged – as natural/normal and cute, but also as dangerous and leading to potential risk. Encouragement of kissing within the dominant heterosexual discourse shapes the way children are constructed as traditional, Western,

Christian, heteronormative citizens (Robinson, 2013). Additionally, dominant gender discourse would position males as those who initiate kissing.

Research on children's kissing within education settings finds that there is an acceptability of gendered, heterosexually normative kissing between boys and girls. Robinson (2013), referring to Butler (1990) and Blaise (2009), identifies kissing as "part of the process of heterosexualization in young children's lives – a process in which children's desires are constituted within gender norms" (Robinson, 2013, p. 96). This is one example, states Robinson (2013, p. 109), of "how representations of childhood reinscribe normative narratives of life that are essential to the construction of the normal adult citizen-subject". Some adults' reaction to children's kissing is clearly located within the themes of childhood innocence and moral panics. A more heightened history of surveillance and intervention by adults on children is found in practices related to masturbation.

Masturbation

The action of masturbation embraces many meanings in history and in children's lives as an act of autoerotic sexuality. Whether it is called 'onanism' (a Biblical reference to Onan in Genesis 38:9), or Shakespeare's use of "fapping" in *The merry wives of Windsor*, and "having traffic with thyself alone" in *Sonnet IV*, masturbation holds moral and cultural meanings. Chapter 3 referred to some ideas on theorising masturbation within sexuality. Foucault (1978/1990) also used the term 'onanism' (see, p. 104) as well as masturbation (1980c). Masturbation appears to come from the Latin meaning 'to disturb with the hand' and also to mean erotic self-stimulation (OED, 2001). Other names for masturbation vary according to cultural context, particularly between adults and children. Oblique

and inoffensive variations, such as ‘self-soothing’, ‘playing with oneself’ or ‘touching oneself’, are frequently used to describe young children’s actions, compared with vulgar terms that are applied to adolescents (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). This chapter includes historical information about the regulation of masturbation in the lives of children. Foucault (1980c) describes the “system of control of sexuality, an objectivisation of sexuality allied to corporal persecution, ... established over the bodies of children” (p. 56), that mushroomed in the nineteenth century to curb children’s masturbation for both boys and girls (e.g., Egan & Hawkes, 2007; S. Jackson, 1990). Ellis (1913), a physician, distinguishes between masturbation, ‘self-abuse’, onanism and auto-eroticism. He claims that, “Probably there is often in such cases some hereditary lack of nervous stability” (p. 239) for these actions in infancy. Ellis also records the effects of masturbation as described by other researchers including eye trouble, insanity (‘psychopathic deterioration’) and ‘evil effects’. He concludes that, “In the absence of the desired partner the orgasm, whatever relief it may give, must be followed by a sense of dissatisfaction, perhaps of depression, even of exhaustion, often of shame and remorse” (2013, p. 257). Ellis (1913) contributes to the production and reiteration in sexuality discourses that forms of masturbation are harmful and therefore non-normative and deviant actions.

Within Aotearoa New Zealand, Truby King’s influence on the nation’s parenting ideas and practices in the early twentieth century included a perspective on masturbation in which he “applauded the ‘natural parental instinct to chide or slap a child for “fingering the privates” ’...[and that] Masturbation constituted another form of self-indulgence, pleasure without purpose” (Olssen, 1981, p. 16).

According to Olssen (1981), control and discipline were central to King's approach to parenting and childrearing.

Viewed as an act of sexual 'knowing', and as an act of sex play (Hawkes & Egan, 2008a), masturbation therefore strips a child of innocence. Moral hygiene movements (Egan & Hawkes, 2007, 2008; Sprague, 1990), and medical and psychiatric doctors in the nineteenth century (deMause, 1974; Flandrin, 1977; Money, 1986) focussed on masturbation as a societal and health problem. Children were placed under the gaze of surveillance by parents and educators. The practice of masturbation by children is highlighted as a specific moral panic of children's sexuality. This particular precocity had the attention of social hygienists and moralists, inviting the deployment of "innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies" (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 30). S. Jackson (1990) suggests: "We no longer fit children out with little suits of armour for their genitals to prevent masturbation, but we remain vigilant and continue to impute sexual motives to children where they may well not exist" (p. 46). A range of medical and cultural discursive positionings continue to produce notions that masturbation is 'normal' or 'abnormal and deviant' (see Mallants & Casteels, 2008).

Freud's (1905/2000) ideas about child sexuality as developmental and driven by instinct, including his theories of phallic and latency stages, were briefly covered in Chapter 3 (see section 3.3). Freud would see that masturbation was expected in early childhood, his notion of 'infantile sexuality', but not within the latency stage. Reznick (cited in Sager, 2010) also notes that children can start masturbating at ages two or three. However, Elias and Gebhard (1969), using Kinsey's interviews with pre-pubescent children, report that more than half of

boys (56%) and a third of girls (30%) masturbate. They state that these children, boys and girls, are more likely to be 'blue-collar classes' and that the majority of boys who masturbate are aged 8 to 10 years and for girls younger, around 6 to 7 years. In contrast to late nineteenth century moral hygienists and early twentieth century paediatricians, this research favourably positions pre-pubescent masturbation within social norms. Money (1986) argues from a psychological perspective to position masturbation as 'normal' experience in children's development. He decries the lack of scientific coverage about "erotosexual development" (p. 332) in child development texts. He states that, "it is the only aspect of child development that is off limits to empirical science" (p. 332). Money is critical of parents and professionals colluding "in not finding out whether erotosexuality is developing healthily or pathologically in a child. To maintain ignorance is to maintain the moral myth of innocence and the scientific myth of latency" (p. 332).

Foucault, using a discursive approach, writes specifically on the deployment of regulatory actions to repress children's masturbation. He says:

...when one considers...the campaign launched against masturbation in the eighteenth century...one does seem to be faced with a discourse of repression...[which] serves to make possible a whole series of interventions, tactical and positive interventions of surveillance, circulation, control and so forth, which seem to have been intimately linked with techniques that give the appearance of repression...I believe the whole crusade against masturbation is a typical example of this.

(Foucault, 1980d, p. 120)

Foucault identifies the eighteenth century as the period in time when this restriction on masturbation occurred:

Suddenly, a panic theme appears: an appalling sickness develops in the Western world. Children masturbate. Via the medium of families, though not at their initiative, a system of control of sexuality, an objectivisation of sexuality allied to corporal persecution, is established over the bodies of children. (Foucault, 1980c, p. 56)

Masturbation is thus introduced here as a specific action of sex/sexuality. It is a site of power relations within gender and class discourses where bodies in general, but children's bodies in particular, are disciplined within truth regimes of medical and moral health. Through notions of child innocence and resulting moral panics (Cohen, 1972), knowledge of sexual pleasure in masturbation is hidden from children. Another site on which power relations deploy tactics of hidden knowledge is that of 'sex talk', where children share their knowledge of sex and intercourse.

Sex talk

Talking about sex is a third practice that researchers identified as offering relations of power/knowledge positions for adults and children across the binary divide of normal or deviant. Whether adults sharing information to educate children, or children sharing information they had come to know, sex talk can be viewed as a method of child agency or indicating some risk for harm (Bhana, 2016).

A starting position for adults in their thinking about children talking about sex is the question: 'are children sexual beings?' (see C. Davies & Robinson,

2010; Renold, 2005). Assumptions based on discourses of childhood innocence and developmental determinism create and sustain ideas that children are not sexual beings. They should not be educated about sexuality until they reach an appropriate age or level of development. A dualism therefore appears to apply, assuming a binary between pre-pubertal or post-pubertal childhood. Renold (2005) cites contrasting research “which demonstrates (pre-teenage) children’s knowledge and curiosity on a...range of sexual matters... children seem to be denied yet simultaneously acknowledged as both sexual beings and becomings” (p. 39). Nonetheless, children, however, construct sexual knowledge “based on the fragments of information available to them” (C. Davies & Robinson, 2010, p. 249).

Renold (2005) identifies in her research the possibilities for learning *from* children, and of children learning from each other. Renold’s comment is directed to educational practitioners and professionals, who “need to disrupt their own normalised assumptions about what constitutes ‘age-appropriate’, ‘gender-appropriate’ and ‘sexually-appropriate’ knowledge and behaviour” (p. 178). ‘Appropriateness’ is considered for children’s safety and development according to societal norms. “The perception of sexuality as a danger to children is linked to fears of the consequences of exposing children to sexual knowledge ‘too early’ and to children’s vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation” (Renold, 2005, p. 251). Fear of harm, it is perceived, results from children accessing knowledge at ‘too young’ an age. Risk and anxiety are notions associated with childhood and sexuality (C. Davies & Robinson, 2010).

Discourses of childhood innocence and moral panics produce power relations where children are classified and subjectified. Talk about sex/sexuality,

including actions of kissing, masturbation and sex talk, reiterates gendered notions of heteronormativity and knowledge of sexual pleasure and reproduction. Talk about sexualities becomes an important aspect of Chapters 6 through 8, when research participants' talk is analysed for the force relations of power on children's bodies in ways that reiterate texts of sexuality/gender. A number of writers, presented in the next section, consider particular discourses that shape children's sexual subjectivities.

4.2 Childhood and sexuality: Contemporary discourses

Constructionist theories of childhood and of sexuality interrogate language as important in understanding the discursive framework for child sexuality agency. Mayall (1996, cited in Robinson, 2008) claims that, "[c]hildren's lives are lived through childhoods constructed for them by adult understandings of childhood and what children are and should be" (Robinson, 2008, p. 121). Fishman (1982) refers to the study of childhood sexuality as "cast[ing] light into the entire arena of child-adult confrontation" (p. 269) in which children are "[i]lliterate by virtue of age, barely audible in the bustle of daily life, usually ignored if not rejected, [and are] left virtually no historical sources of their own" (p. 269). Writing from a postmodern perspective, but also as clinicians, Lamb and Plocha (2014) examine how norms of sexuality in childhood are established, suggesting these are fluid, "even when presented as biological givens" (p. 415). Assumptions of sexuality in childhood and ideas of childhood innocence therefore vary, based on adults own constructions. Egan and Hawkes (2010b), in their study on the sexual child in modernity, claim that discourses about childhood sexuality are "not really about children [but are] emblematic of the anxieties surrounding larger social

instabilities and the need to bring them under control” (p. 7). They analysed the “constellation of discourses on the sexual child in modernity” in which “a range of discursive domains” (p. 7) connected. This section now examines some contemporary discourses about childhood and sexuality. It looks at what connections and disconnections there may be for children and their sexual subjectivities, and how these relate to wider social and cultural settings.

Robinson (2005b) identifies “three dominant contradictory discourses that operate around children and sexuality” (pp. 68-69), described below:

1. There is a socially constructed binary relationship between adults and children where children are perceived as being asexual, innocent and immature.
2. There is a gendered representation of childhood sexuality as tainted innocence and ‘the knowing child’ (e.g., Freud’s ‘seductive child’) whereby the child is held responsible for sexual activity.
3. There is, in addition, a moral panic in which children are viewed, “as sexual beings but lacking the maturity to comprehend and emotionally and physically control such behaviours” (p. 69).

Robinson (2005b) warns that these discourses position children as vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. There is no available voice, in these discourses, for children as active social agents. Rather, they are passive and without authority, without voice to contribute to adult knowledges. In effect, these discourses offer essentialist notions of a universal nature of childhood, regardless of social and cultural contexts.

Frayser (2003), exploring the idea of cultural beliefs about childhood and sexuality, asks, “How have our cultural beliefs about childhood and sexuality channeled what we perceive as normal, what we define as a problem, and what we

ignore or deny?” (2003, p. 255). Earlier, Frayser (1994) questions an assumption of normality: “Because definitions of abnormality and abuse usually relate to baselines of what is normal, data on normal childhood sexuality are conspicuous because of their scarcity” (1994, p. 173). These points show the complexity of this area, and some confusion and uncertainty about adult perceptions of children’s knowledge of sexuality.

Following Robinson’s (2005b) three discourses and Frayser’s (2003) cultural beliefs, there seems to be evidence for five contemporary discourses on child sexuality:

1. That a childhood innocence discourse is claimed within a range of Christian, philosophical and scientific arguments. In this discourse, children are not adults: *ergo*, children should not be sexual or hold ‘adult’ sexual knowledge.
2. That moral panics promote risk protection discourses that ensure the notion of innocent children as weak and vulnerable. This discourse constructs the normal child as different from others those who are constructed as non-normative, deviant or unnatural. Two most recent constructions of risk protection from moral panics include threats to normality within the heteronormative family and to notions and practices of the heterosexual gender binary.
3. That parents are positioned within the adult-child dyad as responsible for the child’s behaviour. This discourse continues and sustains the assumption that parents require training and that monitoring of parents is required to ensure a surveilled and regulated childhood.
4. That uncertainty continues about who should educate children (parents and/or teachers) regarding sexuality/gender. In this discourse, sexuality education for children is contested. It continues to largely construct gender as heteronormative,

and access to knowledge about reproduction and pleasure lacks a coordinated approach.

5. That a more recent ‘pro-child’ discourse has been advanced, positioning children as active social agents constructing their learning and identity – they are beings and becomings (James & Prout, 1997). In social development and international law, and more recently in some avenues of education, children are increasingly included and positioned as citizens. Children are also understood as sexual citizens by some researchers and educationalists (e.g., Robinson, 2012). In each of these five discursive contexts, technologies of power produce multiple social and cultural practices that both reiterate and resist hegemonic heteronormative gender performativity. These constructions of childhood sexuality can be deconstructed through an examination of childhood innocence.

4.2.1 Innocence: Is sexuality irrelevant to children?

Innocence is deconstructed as a discursive strategy of power/knowledge in Christian, philosophical and developmental ideas that position children as weak, vulnerable and requiring adult governance.

Christian and philosophical discourses around innocence

Childhood innocence was introduced into Western thinking by Christianity (deMause, 1974; Lyman, 1974) as a binary opposite to the notion of ‘original sin’ and for children at risk of evil, therefore needing direction and correction. Both Catholic and Protestant Christianity continued this thinking through the Reformation. From an early Christian theology of children as Christ-like, then linked with Locke and Rousseau in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (A.

Taylor, 2010, 2011), children are regarded as ‘naturally innocent’ beings from birth, but endangered and corrupted by adult sexuality (Egan & Hawkes, 2008; A. Taylor, 2010). This presumed innocence of childhood (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998) constructs children as naïve and immature, unable to understand or have interest in gender/sexuality (Blaise, 2009, 2010).

Taking up Rousseau’s notion of ‘Nature’s child’ in *Emile*, the child is framed discursively as born ‘innocent and good’ into a good natural world, but tarnished by the ‘hands of men’ (A. Taylor, 2013a). Further, it is assumed the child is ‘not (biologically) ready’ for either the knowledge or the experience of sex/sexuality. This discourse suggests that prior to puberty, children are not biologically capable, and should not engage in any physical or social experiences that are genital or sexual. A child with sexual knowledge or involved in sexual activity prior to puberty is seen as potentially evil and behaving unnaturally. Sexual information, according to this discourse, is to be withheld from children by adults. McClelland and Hunter (2013) state that, “...sexuality is often used as a dividing line between adulthood and childhood” (p. 61), therefore reflecting a developmental and deterministic understanding of childhood.

Developmental and deterministic aspects of a discourse around innocence

Many people in Western countries may not claim a conscious connection to these foundations for understanding childhood innocence. This material is, nonetheless, a valuable inclusion as a backdrop and base for the progression of this notion of innocence within scientific and psychological disciplines. Developmental theories of biological and social determinism try to locate innocence in the certainty of childhood reality (see A. Taylor, 2010). Universalist ideas of childhood

development suggest that children develop and experience learning and growth in specific stages (e.g., Piaget, 1964). These ideas shape many of the approaches to understanding children within the twentieth century and into the current century. Located in modernist thinking, developmentalism assumes ideas of universal truth shaped by a range of ideas predicated on ‘nature’. What is described as ‘natural’ emerges from the same Western cultural and political contexts.

Developmentalist discourses on children and sexuality find currency within medical (Friedrich et al., 2001; Lamb, 2006; Yates, 1978), social (DeLamater & Friedrich, 2002; Larsson, 2001) and educational (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997; Volbert, 2000) approaches. Hawkes and Egan (2008a) note that in developmentalist discourse, it is necessary to view that “the future adult could be planned through the present child” (p. 460). In this way, “the sexual child was discussable only in the context of the pathway to the properly sexual adult” (Hawkes & Egan, 2008a, p. 461). A number of authors question and challenge the authority of developmentalism (Blaise, 2014; McClelland & Hunter, 2013) and apply poststructuralist analysis to expose the power effects of innocence on children and adults. These poststructuralist approaches to deconstructing innocence take quite a different line of argument.

Non-developmental discursive approaches to innocence

Foucault (1978/1990) describes the absence to access of knowledge of sexuality in childhood as “a pedagogization of children’s sex”, one of the “great strategic unities which...formed specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex” (p. 103). S. Jackson (1990) gives an example of this thinking, and suggests that:

The particular, patterned way in which sexuality is talked and written about maintains it as a discrete, special area of life. In combination with our ideas about the special needs of children and the exclusion of children from adult social life, this creates the possibility of regarding sexual knowledge as something beyond their grasp and the opportunity to prevent them from gaining access to it. (S. Jackson, 1990, p. 48)

A number of researchers (Blaise, 2005, 2009; Renold, 2005; Robinson, 2013; Robinson & Davies, 2015; A. Taylor, 2010) critique notions of innocence, engaging theory informed by Foucault, Butler and queer approaches. Ideas of innocence, they claim, position children in two subjugated ways. Firstly, children are constructed as sexually vulnerable. For example, Bhana (2016) and Robinson (2013) explored how naivety and ignorance about sexuality/gender is potentially harmful for children who do not have information, and yet may have interest and curiosity. Children's innocence is claimed as a form of protection, yet the resulting ignorance has the opposite effect (Hawkes & Egan, 2008b). Ignorance results in increasing vulnerability and that is the risk. Secondly, children are constructed as gendered within the heterosexual matrix, a male/female binary (Butler, 1999). Gender performatives sustain practices of power relations whereby sex and sexuality invest understandings of dominant masculine satisfaction in sexual relationships and pleasure. Boys and girls are mobilised by the discourse of innocence "to produce 'good' normative adult citizen-subjects" (Robinson, 2013, p. 35), where "the girl child in particular has traditionally personified innocence and vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation from predatory male adults" (pp. 35-36).

Robinson (2012) points to a fundamental paradox of perception of children's innocence, in that 'asexuality' positions children as "too young to understand sexuality" (p. 268). And yet, "the construction of heterosexual identities and desire in early childhood is a socially sanctioned integral part of children's everyday educational experiences – for example, mock weddings, kiss and chase, mummies and daddies" (p. 268). Robinson also queries thinking that suggests that corruption of a child's innocence would lead to "children's promiscuity and immature sexual activity [and] the formation of the promiscuous adult or the deviant adult citizen/sexual citizen" (p. 264).

The discourse of the 'knowing child' is both ironic and highly problematic in that a critical way of increasing children's competence and resilience is to provide them with language and knowledge about sexuality and an understanding of what constitutes ethical and unethical sexual relationships. It is the perceived 'innocence' constituted in the dominant discourse of childhood that is tenaciously protected by adults that can lead to their vulnerability. (Robinson, 2012, p. 265)

Taylor and Richardson (2005) also contest "the assumption of cloistered childhood innocence" (p. 167). This notion of innocence, they argue, plays into the reproduction of universalised ideals of normative heterosexual family relations and a Romantic view of a perfect childhood. An 'adultist' position (LeFrancois, 2013; Peters & Johansson, 2012), in relation to 'childhood', belies a fantasy where children's lives are sites created according to a natural and biological agenda. This approach does not attend to cultural and socio-political discourses. Foucault's (1984/1986) notion of heterotopia (as a space of otherness and absence), and Taylor and Richardson's (2005) application of this idea, disturbs the

Romantic appearance of childhood. Innocence, while idealised and viewed as natural, can be both present and absent in the *locus* of children living in an adult-dominated and shaped world. The mirror - between utopic and heterotopic childhood - is a mixed, joint experience, showing what is present, but when viewed in the mirror, is absent. Childhood is a mirror for adults and their experience and dreams in relation to sexuality/gender. Perhaps this connects Moll's (1909/1912) pondering: "I believe that an advance in our knowledge of the sexual life of the child will indirectly enrich our knowledge also of the sexual life of the adult" (p. xi). In other words, research that examines adults' understandings of childhood sexuality, such as that of the present study, might also provide understandings for adults about sexuality.

A. Taylor (2010) considers that the notion of a 'sexual adulthood and innocent childhood' is a relatively modern Western concept. To maintain this construction of innocence, A. Taylor (2010) claims that adults and children require separation. "Viewed in this way, periodic moral panics and public media debates have simultaneously maintained and reproduced the idea of childhood innocence as an a-priori given...and called for the radical separation of adults' and children's worlds" (p. 53). In particular, Bhana (2016) questions adults who sustain the sexual innocence of children in the South African context confronted by AIDS. Questioning "the price of innocence in the time of AIDS" (p. 1), Bhana draws upon a multidimensional understanding of power, bringing together concepts of discourse, power, agency and vulnerability. Egan and Hawkes (2009) further problematise ideas of innocence regarding the notion of protection, and argue for movement towards recognition of the sexual agency of the child. Their argument opposes the notion that child innocence provides a rationale for adults'

mobilisation to protect children and prevent harm. This rationale is seen frequently within moral panics, a specific strategy that gives innocence in childhood a particular foothold, raising fears for children's safety and constructing children as weak and vulnerable. The contribution of moral panics to contemporary risk protection discourses are a further area for deconstruction.

4.2.2 Risk Protection: Moral panics and thinking that sexuality is dangerous to children

Described as a political strategy (Robinson, 2008), moral panics use innocence to position children as weak and vulnerable within sex/sexuality and childhood discourses. Risk may be perceived where there is none, as noted by S. Jackson (1990) about no longer providing 'armour' to protect a child's chastity. Moral panics are a strategy which construct the idea of required vigilance on the presupposition that harm is not far away. Particular harms (of delinquency, promiscuity and abuse) and forms of vigilance (of moral and social campaigns) are described below, including specific panics that have occurred in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Identifying demons of delinquency and promiscuity

Cohen's (1972) seminal work, which focusses on youth culture and media, describes a moral panic as occurring when a "...condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (p. 9). Media coverage of events, according to Cohen, highlights and develops the panic, engaging the public to demand for increased punitive responses to offending actions. Moral panics utilise fear and defensive strategies

to ensure maintenance of the notion of innocence and vulnerability of children from people who are viewed as deviant or unnatural. More recent awareness of child sexual abuse has resulted in policies and procedures focussing on child protection and risk reduction.

The Victorian era, according to Clements (1998), ushered in a period of prudery, hiding civil discussion or academic discourse on sexuality from the public. Foucault highlights the contrariness of that era in which “sex became something to say...it had to be put into words” (1978/1990, p. 32). Foucault claims that, “Rather than a massive censorship, beginning with the verbal proprieties imposed by the Age of Reason, what was involved was a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse” (p. 34). This production of sex discourse engendered immense resistance. Ranging from moral crusaders to social and political protagonists, various disciplinary effects were implemented to police adults’ and children’s sexual actions. Religious ideologies and beliefs influenced the resistance to sex talk, particularly between parents and children. Children were objectified as demons (with original sin) or innocents (Christ-like), where evil and corruption were imagined by the language of normality or of fear (S. Jackson, 1990).

Discourses around risk protection constructed from moral panics

Notions of natural and developmental innocence contribute to the development of risk anxiety and increased requirement for surveillance of children (S. Jackson & Scott, 2010; Levine, 2002). One concern is the ‘sexualisation of childhood’ (Blaise, 2009; Levine, 2002; Moore & Reynolds, 2018; Sanderson, 2004) in families, but also more widely in society through advertising and entertainment.

The child, “alive with perilous sexual sensibility” (Hawkes & Egan, 2008a, p. 443), produces an anxiety and phobia requiring professional and parental supervision to produce heteronormative sexual subjects. Herriot and Hiseler (2015) note how adults were increasingly anxious about children. They claim that normative assumptions of children as natural, universal and heterosexual do not match reality.

This frustration-fuelled panic with youth’s sexual behaviours is reminiscent of the ‘masturbation phobia’ of the 19th century, where physicians, quacks and self-help gurus sadistically and often violently sought to mould ‘deviant’ children who masturbated into more acceptably asexual youth. (Herriot & Hiseler, 2015, p. 293)

C. Davies (2012) claims that moral panics are mobilised to reinforce regulation when boundaries of perceived ‘appropriate’ knowledge are transgressed (see also C. Davies & Robinson, 2010). Moral panics effect an increase in governance and surveillance of children through social norms, developed particularly within settings of school education and family life. Sexuality is considered an ‘adults only’ site of knowledge, from which children, supposed to be ‘too young’ to understand such knowledge, should be protected through the denial of access to information. Robinson (2012) finds that moral panic is fuelled by perpetuating the myth that traditional heterosexual family morals and practices are being undermined. She claims that moral panics are:

Used as a political strategy...for maintaining the heteronormative nature of the curriculum in schools, as well as the hegemony of the nuclear family, the sanctity of heterosexual relationships, and the heteronormative social order more broadly in society. (Robinson, 2012, p. 268)

She adds that this myth includes that education around gay and lesbian families is teaching young children how to be gay. Specifically, moral panics reassert adult-child relations of power and regulation of children's access to sexual knowledge, and also reassert conservative heteronormative morals and values as the foundation for citizenship (see also Blaise, 2005, 2010; A. Taylor, 2007; A. Taylor, & Richardson, 2005).

Panics and fears of children's sexual activity relate to Foucault's (1978/1990) pedagogisation of children's sex. He states that an effect of the 'politics of sex' is the production of 'sexuality', "rather than the repression of sex" (p. 114). This project highlights the production of sexuality, identifying a puritanical concern in Western societies from the nineteenth century (Egan & Hawkes, 2007). Masturbation was one particular concern, as noted previously. People believed that sexual knowledge (e.g., sexual pleasure in masturbation) invited or pre-empted children's sexual activity. Strategies to repress masturbation produced a moral panic that responded to adults' fear of children accessing this specific sexual knowledge. This particular sexual knowledge focusses on pleasure, thereby the presumed need is to give attention to repression of masturbation. Blaise (2013) expresses concern about the effect of this repression and claims, "The moral panic discourse is shutting down discussions about how children are making meaning of gender and sexuality" (p. 801). A further effect of moral panics is not only repression for children on accessing sexual knowledge of pleasure, but significantly also shutting down spaces for discussions by adults about how they make meaning of gender and sexuality in the lives of children.

Moral panics in Aotearoa New Zealand

Governance and discipline of children's sexuality occurred within the moral hygiene movements of the late nineteenth century, the concerns about promiscuity among young people following World War II, and fear of sexual abuse of children since the 1980s. A number of panics around sexuality are identified in New Zealand writing. The 1954 Mazengarb Report (Mazengarb, 1954) responded to 'juvenile delinquency' and, in particular, the rise of teenage pregnancies (see Besley, 2002) and "what were identified as gaps in the moral development of young people" (Crocket, Flanagan, Winslade & Kotzé, 2011, p. 6). A further panic developed during the 1980s and particularly the 1990s when victims-survivors of sexual abuse began to disclose their stories. As particular stories of child abuse were reported, panics developed about child safety and risk protection within education, churches, clubs and neighbourhoods. Contributing to these panics were stories of the 1989 abduction, abuse and murder of Carla Cardno in Wellington (Newbold, 2016); of the reporting of the multiple court cases regarding the 1992 Christchurch Civic Crèche case involving Peter Ellis' abuse of young children (Herkt & Whiteside, 2003); of seven charges in 1997 against Hamilton primary school teacher, John Edgar, for indecently assaulting seven boys (Thompson, 1998); and of coverage of the trial of seven men from Pitcairn Island in 2004 for 55 charges relating to sexual offenses (Farran, 2007). These specific media stories held significant attention in Aotearoa New Zealand, having effects for the development and regeneration of risk protection programmes in primary schools.

Notions of childhood innocence and moral panics that respond to ideas of risk to children demand practices of 'risk protection'. These force adults to

discipline and regulate children's behaviour. Included in these responses are governance practices that shape parenting and education.

4.2.3 Parental responsibility: Constructing good and healthy citizens

S. Jackson (1990) highlights the secrecy of sex for children, and how this assumes a parental responsibility to conceal the secret of sex from children. She argues:

It is not simply that we hide sex from children and then worry about how to reveal it to them... Secrets are themselves a creation of the deployment of discourse and an incitement to discourse. Ever since circumspection with respect to children and sex began to be observed this has been the case. It is now *the* secret which we conceal from children, and is defined as such by the fact of our keeping it from them. As such it serves as a continual compulsion to produce an ever increasing volume of words. (S. Jackson, 1990, p. 48)

S. Jackson's words alert to the repression of secrecy in society and in the family around sexuality, positioning parents, in particular, as morally and socially responsible for holding this secret.

Constructing a new social morality: The responsibility of the domestic family

Significant shifts in understanding about childhood and sexuality occurred in the eighteenth century. Two significant social changes occurred: a developing focus on family structure, and the spatial separation of households from places of work. Along with these social changes came different moral attitudes. S. Jackson (1990, p. 35) identifies "a new concern for the moral welfare of children" and, according

to deMause (1974), a new empathy for children developed with a branch of medicine that focussed on childhood, “paediatrics was born” (de Mause, 1974, p. 52). Jackson (1990) notes that parents needed to focus particularly on their children, since “childhood was transformed from a social status to a psychological state” (p. 34). S. Jackson (1990) reflects Ariès’ suggestion that prior to the Enlightenment, “children who had not reached reproductive maturity were regarded as simply not interested in sex” (p. 33). In fact, Ariès reports, “nobody thought that this innocence really existed” (Ariès, 1962, p. 106).

Ariès (1962) identifies a social and domestic shift where “the child has taken a central place in the family” (p. 133), calling the period a “new moral climate” (p. 119). These changes coincided with the rise of capitalism and a bourgeoisie class. With a developing domestic privacy in this period, children of middle class families, in particular, now had bedrooms separate from their parents (S. Jackson, 1990). This new domesticity reinforced a notion of childhood as a distinct and significant stage of life supporting the idea of childhood innocence and purity.

This ‘new climate’ formed a “moral concept which insisted on the weakness of childhood” (Ariès, 1962, p. 113). Puritanical morality brought further divisions between adults and children with new practices to conceal sexuality within both society and the family. Consequently, moral ‘principles’ of child development were shaped. These included principles of: adult supervision (children must never be left alone); discipline (children must not be pampered); modesty (children should be alone in bed, and conceal their bodies from one another when going to bed); and etiquette, to develop character and reason (to abandon familiarity for moderation of manners and language). As for any

discussion about sex, “One of the unwritten laws of contemporary morality ... requires adults to avoid any reference, above all any humorous reference, to sexual matters in the presence of children” (Ariès, 1962, p. 100).

Moralists now claimed they were “rescuing children from a state of sin” (S. Jackson, 1990, p. 36). They campaigned against practices that promoted immodesty and indecency, such as “the multiple occupancy of beds and bedrooms...lax attitudes to sex games and leaving children too much in the company of servants” (p. 36). These changes, such as separate bedrooms, caused a further hiding of sexual knowledge from children’s experience, but poignantly, parents were soon required to engage in surveillance of their children.

This secrecy and circumspection about sex shaped a moralising position regarding children and sexuality. The British public equated childhood with innocence, and innocence with sexual ignorance. As an example, in 1842, a British commission on child labour in coalmines focussed on indecency, rather than children’s squalid working conditions. The commission reported on:

...semi-naked men, women and children working together. The commissioners surmised that this meant children being exposed to ‘vice and debauchery’. The press pruriently sensationalized this aspect of the report. ...for example, [publishing] a version of the illustration of winding in which a half-naked boy and girl are clinging together, she sitting astride his knees, as they are wound down the pit shaft. ...it was assumed that the working conditions led inevitably to immorality. ... ‘no other result could accrue’. (S. Jackson, 1990, p. 41)

Viewed as immoral by the developing bourgeoisie, this situation was also seen as unnatural. Supported by media-fuelled moral panic, the bourgeois environment

reinforced the perspective of a child's natural state of innocence. Threatened in this (working-class) coalmine context, children's innocence should be preserved within the family. It was the family home that was seen where children could be effectively prevented from knowing about sex. The (middle class) family was considered a safe, protected and innocent domestic home context (S. Jackson, 1990).

Kellogg, in 1877, and Wood, Lerrigo and Rice, in the 1920s, considered that children required management and training (Egan & Hawkes, 2008). Fishman (1982) refers to Watson, a behavioural scientist published in 1928, who "claimed in his child-rearing manual that virtually all mothers were unenlightened by the latest scientific findings and therefore unfit to be mothers" (p. 280), suggesting that, rather than parents, scientists should raise children. The views of experts grew into social and cultural expectations of parents as responsible for their children's behaviour and eventual 'outcome' as adults. Theories and ideologies of family life, social and cultural contexts engendered such beliefs about children, and contributed to further development of practices associated with parent-training and child-management, particularly around sexuality (Hawkes & Egan, 2008a). Fishman (1982) describes the wheel as having turned:

Childhood sexuality, formerly a matter of little concern to anyone, passed out of the hands of theologians and parents into the hands of experts who claimed to be morally neutral, but all wise about what was best for children. (p. 281)

Following the Second World War, one international parenting expert, Dr Spock (1954), wrote specifically for parents, following the ideas of parents shaping

children as citizens of society. A particular piece was about “Dealing with worries and sexual interests” (pp. 183-189). On nudity, he states,

Child psychiatrists have raised doubts whether the effect of [nudity] on children is as wholesome as was originally hoped. They have evidence that, in certain cases at least, a mother’s nudity may be too exciting for her small son, the father’s nudity too stimulating to his daughter. (p. 189)

Spock’s influence was international, with some people appreciating his different approach to children and child-rearing practices.

Childhood nudity is a site for contested ideas about childhood and innocence (Gabb, 2013; Tate, 2017). In Kinsey’s interviews with children, Elias and Gebhard (1969) found that boys are generally allowed “more nudity than girls, except in homes where nudity is a common practice – girls report[ed] a higher incidence of nudity” (p. 404). They also report, “nudity in the lower-class home is more the exception than the rule for both girls and boys; in the upper-class home almost the reverse is true” (p. 405). Nudity was but one aspect of the parent/child relationship in which parents were under the gaze of self and societal panoptic governance. Ideas of parent education also took foundation in Aotearoa New Zealand society.

Parenting as a practice of shaping social morality in Aotearoa New Zealand

Early in the twentieth century, medical practitioner, Sir Truby King founded the Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children, later called the Plunket Society (so-named after Lord and Lady Plunket: Lord Plunket was Governor-General at the time). King’s work (see Olssen, 1981) “propounded a system of mothercraft [including] specific application of his common-sense

principles, including his strenuous advocacy of natural feeding..." (Deem & Fitzgibbon, 1953, p. 10). The Plunket Society held a dominant place in 'mothercraft' practices in Aotearoa New Zealand throughout the twentieth century. This had ongoing effects for constructions of parental responsibilities for childhood health and wellbeing.

During the 1940s and 1950s the Plunket Society in Aotearoa New Zealand published *Modern Mothercraft* as "a guide to parents" (Deem & Fitzgibbon, 1953, p. 11). Directed at mothers, chapters cover a range of topics including preparation for motherhood, care of the newborn, natural and artificial feeding, growth and development, care for premature babies, and care for pre-school children. The section on "The father's role" consists of only three paragraphs within the 240-page book. It assumes that "he, too, will be interested in learning how to become a successful parent" (p. 16) and encourages fathers to attend "parentcraft classes". Encouragement of fathers included, "He should assist with the hard work about the house, such as scrubbing and washing, do all the heavy lifting and help in every way to make her life pleasant and free from irritation and anxiety" (p. 16). Included in guidance for parenthood is "the observance of the instructions given by the doctor and the clinic Sister" (p. 17).

Of particular interest for this thesis is Chapter VIII of *Modern Mothercraft* on 'The pre-school child'. Explicit in the pronouns used (e.g., 'his') is the implicit weighting towards masculinity. These assumptions support the development of "normal healthy children" (p. 120). Mothers are provided detailed advice on what good mothercraft entails. This includes 'the child' taking responsibility for 'his' [sic] actions, for example, on toilet training: "Control is something the child learns for himself and is not 'taught' by the mother" (p. 127). "Little boys", the advice

reads, should be taught to lift the toilet seat, and, “If a little boy doesn’t get the idea of standing up to urinate, he should go to the lavatory with his father or brother” (p. 128). Mothercraft advice positions mothers to maintain the gendered practices of the time. There is also a section on mental health and relationships (Gallagher, 1953).

Considering King’s work for shaping social and cultural norms, and the aftermath of the Mazengarb report in 1954, Donnelly (1978) later pointed out concerns about sexuality and children in 1970s Aotearoa New Zealand. He wrote,

The ambivalence we have toward our own sexuality is shown in our reactions to each other and in our rearing of children...Susan Butterworth⁵ sees the occasional moral panics in this country about sex and the young as evidence of the separation of the sexual from the rest of our lives. She believes that changes in sexual behaviour are more toward openness than toward promiscuity. There has been a massive plot to keep children ill-informed which has made them rely on the misinformation of their peers. (pp. 171-172)

Donnelly’s comment reflects concern for the ways children are kept ignorant, the effects of this hidden and secret knowledge for young people, and subsequently, the irony and potential harm from ‘the separation of the sexual from the rest of our lives’. Western societies construct parenthood, from the nineteenth century, into a practice of disciplining children and regulating childhood. Specific child-rearing practices were also regulated for parents over this period. The next section explores some of these practices, a form of bio-power that produces particular

⁵ Susan Butterworth was a New Zealand historian and writer. Donnelly cites a series of her articles titled ‘Moral panics old and new’ in *The New Zealand Listener*, March 16, 23, and 30, 1974.

parenthoods and childhoods. One specific behaviour given much attention is that of masturbation.

Constructing domestic childhood: A new family morality

By preserving innocence within the context of family and home, parents are positioned as primarily responsible for children's innocence. Responsibility grew with the introduction of parenting instruction manuals. The social hygienist movement in the nineteenth century in Britain (Egan & Hawkes, 2007, 2008) and the United States (Sprague, 1990) continues into social development theory and politics in the twenty-first century (e.g., see Ryan, 2000b). Programmes are developed and implemented to shape (train) parenting practices. These programmes aim to control or manage child behaviour towards normative and socially/culturally accepted ideals. Within this context, some authors claim that parents hold responsibility for children's training about sexuality (e.g., Hawkes & Egan, 2008a). Gesell and Ilg (1946), for example, offer 'guidance' for parents and understanding of children's sexual development, in which clear gender differences emerge.

The period from five to ten years is not a dormant or a latent sexual period... Unremitting elaborations of the self and sex attitudes are laying the foundation for the more acute developments of puberty... Information must be skilfully imparted and also skilfully withheld; because it should be graduated to suit the occasion and the child's maturity. ... The chief goal... should be to preserve easy, mutual confidence between mother and child, father and child (sometimes the latter relationship is the more vital). If sex exploration or an adventure in nudity is reported or discovered, the

parent should so far as possible rationalize it calmly in her [sic] own mind ... (Gesell & Ilg, 1946, p. 316)

Through a tone of moral guidance the authors position parents (clearly aimed at mothers in the first instance) to know their children well so that they can identify when and how 'sex guidance' can be effective. By regulating children they recommended "suggestion and ... indirection", but to avoid "over protection through silence and evasion; and over reliance on excessively candid information" (p. 316). Gesell and Ilg also offered explicit advice to parents (mothers) about differences for boys and girls in their accessing information about sex:

Boys are more likely to get sex "information" from non-parental sources. They are more active and persistent in experimental play and exploration...Comparing boys and girls as groups, girls tend to show a more precocious interest in sex than boys. (1946, p. 317)

The authors remark on a child's sexual exploration, and maintain the gendered language common to the period: "His [the child's] increasing interest in the far-off future indicates that an irrepressible impulse to grow up is part of his irrepressible self" (p. 318). This language constructs masculinity in boys as (naturally) irrepressible and impulsive. Within a chapter on developing sex interest, this language reiterates patriarchal attitudes to masculine sexual self-understanding and entitlement. These deterministic approaches repeat gendered and biologically-informed notions of masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality and the normative nuclear family.

One specific action requiring parental intervention, recurrently commented on by moralists and parenting experts, is masturbation. This is viewed as an area of harmful sexual practice. However, prior to the Enlightenment period, Fallopius

(a sixteenth century anatomist) advised parents that they “be zealous in infancy to enlarge the penis of the boy” (deMause, 1974, p. 48; see also Flandrin, 1977).

Schleiner (1997) suggests that by encouraging erection, parents were assured that male children were physically capable for procreation, and Money (1996) records that adults had previously masturbated children as a way to sooth them when upset. S. Jackson (1990) notes that masturbation “was tolerated in children until the eighteenth century” (p. 33). Adult masturbation was regulated through medieval penitentials as a minor sin, but formerly, regulation rarely extended to childhood (deMause, 1974; S. Jackson, 1990; Money, 1986) until the eighteenth century. While such actions may have sought some physiological assurance of penile erection, the ‘new moral climate’ caused confusion about encouraging autoeroticism.

Masturbation is now a site of bio-power (see Chapter 2), where sex is morally and medically constructed as harmful to children and in need of regulation. Parents were encouraged to punish children for masturbation and “doctors began to spread the myth that it would cause insanity, epilepsy, blindness, and death” (deMause, 1974, p. 48; see also Moll, 1909/1912; R. N. Wilson, 1913). S. Jackson (1990) comments that tolerance “of childhood masturbation had come to an end; it was now the root of all moral ills and the utmost vigilance was urged on parents and educators to seek it out and punish it” (p. 37). For example, in 1877, Kellogg “warned parents about the perils of precocious sexuality in the life of the child...[which]...Once set into motion, precocious sexuality and its result – auto-erotic activity – was nearly impossible to stop” (Egan & Hawkes, 2008, p. 355).

These historical details indicate some curious shift in morality regarding the self-touching of genitals, especially by children. Various historical and cultural ideas add to confusion for adults, both parents and educators. Parenting is now a site of power for societal regulation of sexuality in the family and in childhood.

Discourses around domesticity: Parenting as power/knowledge relations

Foucault (1978/1990) also recorded the shift of sexuality as a discourse of public word and action, towards a private, domestic context. “Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home” (p. 3). The Age of Reason was one where “verbal proprieties [were] imposed” (p. 34) on sexual discourse and “modern puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence ... in which the history of sexuality must be seen first of all as the chronicle of an increasing repression” (p. 4-5). This increasing repression is seen within families as the philosophical development in understanding childhood as innocent took root during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Corresponding practices were introduced to govern childhood through shaping behaviour and rescuing from sin, e.g., curbing masturbation through punishment, and separating children from the coital activity of their parents. Practices of regulating childhood sexuality shifted into medical discourse, specifically paediatrics. Sexual discourse became hidden within the domestic context as “taboo, nonexistence, and silence” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 5). The new bourgeoisie class saw change in the domestic environment where “family life had...been seen as a bastion for morality” (S. Jackson, 1990, p. 39). The bourgeoisie family became “morally superior to both aristocracy and proletariat” (p. 39) and intensified gender roles. For example,

Bourgeois women were excluded from business but ‘devoted’ to domestic responsibilities (S. Jackson, 1990).

C. Davies and Robinson’s (2010) research included parents sharing about their sense of risk when speaking with their children about sexuality. Davies and Robinson report on parental fears of “transgressing the boundaries of developmentalism” (p. 253) which could identify them as “bad parents” and “bad mothers”. They note that “educating children about sexuality was considered a risky business by parents in our research” (p. 259). The question hangs: “when, how and what knowledge they should raise...with their children” (p. 253). For fear of being regarded as bad parents or bad mothers, parents are themselves under surveillance to speak and not speak sexuality in ‘appropriate’ ways to their children. Associated discourses of ‘denial’ and ‘delay’ (Renold, 2005) reflect an idea that sex and sexuality, and knowledge of these, is something only for adults or post-pubertal children/adolescents.

Parenting discourse has shifted over the last two centuries towards specific practices of management of child sexual behaviour (disciplining the body) and, with teachers, education of children for sexual citizenship (governing the population). Consideration is now given to issues related to children and sexuality education.

4.2.4 Education and other sources of sexual knowledge:

Providing only ‘appropriate’ knowledge

A dominant construction of childhood claims that sexual knowledge is irrelevant and developmentally inappropriate for children (Robinson, 2012). Yet, research demonstrates that children engage with sexuality in their daily lives (C. Davies &

Robinson, 2010; de Graaf & Rademakers, 2006; Goldman & Goldman, 1982; S. Jackson, 1982; Robinson, 2012; Robinson & C. Davies, 2015). This research also recognises that children are aware and critically think about their bodies and relationships with others. Children explore, and many actively seek information, whether in formal contexts of school or settings that may be less supervised, such as the internet.

Pedagogies of social and cultural morality

Foucault (1978/1990) claims that “the sexuality of children was already problematized in the spiritual pedagogy of Christianity” (p. 117), but at the turn of the nineteenth century, a “mutation took place” in which “the technology of sex was ordered in relation to the medical institution, the exigency of normality, and...the problem of life and illness” (p. 117). During this period, sexual talk and practices were further shaped and constrained within social and religious law by practices of power. S. Jackson (1990) notes, “sexuality was not being ignored nor were thoughts of it suppressed: it was at the forefront of Victorian consciousness” (p. 41). Public discourse used language of modesty and prudery. However, “treating it [sexuality] with circumspection, barring its mention from polite conversation, marks it, as Foucault says, as *the* secret and places it at the heart of discourse” (S. Jackson, 1990, p. 41), such as the significantly hidden trade of pornography.

From the moral hygiene movement in the United States, there were efforts to develop scientifically based programmes of education for young people about sexuality (Sprague, 1990), based on knowledge of reproduction and genital health. Hawkes and Egan (2008a) identify the historical shaping of this knowledge by

professionals as “the right knowledge” (p. 453) and that parents have a duty to be compliant and communicate this “mechanical, rationalized and ordered” (p. 460) knowledge to their children. This process results in developmentally appropriate, “proper sexualization” (Hawkes & Egan, 2008b). Nonetheless, this pedagogical initiative could not shake off “an unfounded fear held by some adults and schooling officials that if you provide children with information they will actively engage in that behaviour” (Robinson, 2012, p. 269).

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education includes sexuality education within the curriculum and this provides for variation in content at different levels of school (see ‘Appendix E’ for examples of sexuality education in the curriculum for primary and intermediate school levels). The New Zealand Police also produces optional material for the early childhood sector⁶ and for primary schools⁷ to include in their programmes.

Robinson (2013, pp. 137-140) describes five myths and contradictions of sexuality education and childhood.

1. Children are asexual and sexuality is irrelevant to young children’s lives.
2. Talking with children about sexuality is developmentally inappropriate.
3. Sexuality education encourages children to be sexually active earlier.
4. Children who transgress normative gendered behaviours in childhood will turn out to be gay.
5. ‘Once I’ve done “the talk” I’ve done my bit as a parent’.

⁶ <https://www.police.govt.nz/advice/personal-and-community-advice/school-portal/resources/successful-relationships/kos-0-3>

⁷ <https://www.police.govt.nz/about-us/publication/keeping-ourselves-safe-resources-years-4-6>

These myths summarise widely held beliefs about the dangers of sexuality education. Robinson (2012), reflecting upon the early educational context, notes that,

Not only do many adults in these early educational contexts strictly regulate the construction of children's sexual knowledge and police the construction of children's gender, so do children themselves. Children are active and knowing agents in the process of gender construction, engaging in the policing of gender performances of other children (and adults), within rigid boundaries of what is widely considered appropriate masculine and feminine behaviours. (p. 267)

C. Davies and Robinson (2010) also reflect on practices and perceived risks around sex education with children as misguided. Levine (2002), responding to ideas of withholding information, claims that "censorship is not protection" (p. 19). She contends that "to give children a fighting chance in navigating the sexual world, adults need to saturate it with accurate, realistic information and abundant, varied images and narratives of love and sex" (Levine, 2002, p. 19).

Governance around sexuality in the lives of adults and children in the Western world primarily takes place within the family and schooling. Schooling in Western education systems is largely constructed as reassuring to the heteronormative family and to dominant notions and practices of the heterosexual gender binary. Where panic is introduced to respond to questions about normative sexuality education, fear and retaliation can occur towards acceptance and inclusion of difference. Furthermore, this panic subtly and brutally sustains normative practices of male entitlement, patriarchal dominance. As Robinson (2012) notes, "contemporary childhood has become the most intensively governed

period of personal existence” (p. 5) as a way to ensure ongoing heterosexualisation. Robinson (2008) also focusses on schooling, as:

a site where technologies of power operate to perpetuate ‘regimes of truth’ that uphold the hegemonic social, political and moral values of dominant and powerful groups; it is also an unstable site, where differing discourses operate in tension with each other, vying for a position of authority. (p. 117)

Providing both research findings and cautionary messages, Silin (1995) and Bhana (2016) draw attention to concerns about health and life/death in the context of AIDS when sexuality information is withheld from children. Provision of sexuality education, or lack of this provision, finds linkage to arguments about children’s rights in terms of children’s sexual agency and sexual citizenship.

4.2.5 Children’s rights discourse

Historical views of childhood identify a range of concepts and responses to ideas of child vulnerability with subsequent moves for care and protection. More recent concerns about abuse of children, sexual abuse and exploitation in particular, have resulted in national and international legislation to protect children. The specific lenses with which such legislation emerges may reflect developmental approaches and risk supporting a notion of ‘the universal child’. Gendered effects of sexual abuse may also heighten ideas of a (damaged) young female sexuality that is equated with excess (McClelland & Hunter, 2013).

The New Zealand legal landscape reveals a developmental approach within its legislation on childhood, making use of age in years to distinguish stages of childhood leading to levels of physical and psychological maturity in

justice contexts. Levine (2003), in her research, avoided the term ‘age appropriate’ as it is “both too specific and not specific enough” (p. 183). Children are identified in the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 (N.Z.) for two purposes: care and protection (s. 13-207ZO); and youth justice (s. 208-340). Children are defined as under the age of 14 years, while young persons are those of or over the age of 14 but under 17 years (s. 2). The Crimes Act 1961 (N.Z.) determines that no child under age 10 years can be convicted (s. 21), while children aged 10-13 years cannot be convicted “unless he or she knew either that the act or omission was wrong or that it was contrary to law” (s. 22)⁸.

The universal child

In the twentieth century, children’s rights were established within the context of international human rights legislation (Heinze, 2000), including the 1924 League of Nations *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, the 1959 United Nations *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, and the 1990 United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Heinze (2000) positions the 1924 document as setting “the stage for a legal regime that will be defined by children’s biological, psychological and emotional distinctiveness. Such views did not enter law by chance. They coincided with socio-scientific movements brimming with theories of childhood” (p. 5).

⁸ The web site of the Office of the Children’s Commissioner (<http://www.occ.org.nz/childrens-rights-and-advice/legal-rights/>) states that:

- A child aged 10 or 11 cannot be prosecuted for a criminal offence, except for the offences of murder and manslaughter.
- A child aged 12 or 13 can be prosecuted for murder or manslaughter and can also be prosecuted for other very serious criminal offences (e.g. robbery with another person. This is called “aggravated robbery”).

These coinciding movements are described by Heinze as six socio-scientific models that shaped legal understandings and developments of ‘the universal child’, as summarised below.

1. The *global* child (questioning concepts of childhood in international law, but also for domestic jurisdictions).
2. The *essentialised* child (which stresses the shared, constant elements of human development).
3. The *socialised* child (acknowledging culture, and ideas of childhood as apprenticeship for adulthood).
4. The *constructed* child (as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies).
5. The *contextual* child (suggesting models of childhood that draw upon broad and fluid variables: such as geography, economics, class, gender and race).
6. The *sexual* child (examining the legal regulation of child sexuality).

Heinze (2000) concludes that, “the universal child is a contextual being” (p. 20).

These models provide another perspective in understanding childhood as fragmented and not unitary.

Martinson (1990) also explores the legal status of children’s erotic and sexual rights. Conceptualised as paradigms of ‘property’, ‘protection’ and ‘personal’, Martinson describes children’s rights as located within understandings of children as the physical property of parents (property), or the child as a person-in-training until mature (protection), or children as citizens in their own right (personal). The notions in each of these paradigms connects to positionings of children in various discourses related to childhood, whether claiming innocence and ignorance, or agentic positioning as citizens. Martinson (1990) concludes that

“the first aspect of the child’s right to sexual freedom is his [sic] right to information about sexuality” (p. 123). Egan and Hawkes (2009) consider children’s sexual agency. For them, ideas of child protection are problematic and they argue the need to recognise the sexual agency of children.

The ‘citizen’ child

C. Davies (2012) identifies a pro-child theme that surfaced in the second half of the twentieth century, that of children as active social agents constructing their learning and identity. Taken up in contexts of social development and international law, and more recently in education, children are increasingly viewed, positioned, and included, as ‘citizens’ (see James, 2011; Robinson, 2013; A. Taylor, 2018). This has effects for understanding of children as sexual citizens (Robinson, 2013, 2016). C. Davies (2012) claims that linking the regulation of children’s access to knowledge of sexuality to ideas of childhood and innocence is a means through which ‘good’ heteronormative adult citizenship subject is constituted and governed.

Robinson (2012) refers to children’s “difficult citizenship” where they are regarded as citizens-in-development, but not full citizens. In the task of developing children as good citizens, and therefore as good sexual citizens (good citizens are defined as “white, middle-class, heterosexual and upholding Christian family morals and values”: p. 258), children require protection from corruption and the wrong kind of sexual knowledge and experience. Robinson declares that:

The ‘pure’ and ‘innocent’ child is critical to the formation of the good moral heteronormative adult citizen. Children’s access to sexual knowledge before it is considered to be developmentally appropriate –

discursively defined within a moral, Christian, heteronormative framework – is perceived as corrupting the child's innocence and potentially leading to children's promiscuity and immature sexual activity. (Robinson, 2012, pp. 264-265)

Citizenship, and sexual citizenship in particular, is determined according to social and cultural discursive criteria, and expected to conform to Butler's (1990, 1999) heterosexual matrix (see Chapter 2).

Key ideas in Chapter 4

This chapter has presented a history about how sexuality in childhood is represented, together with a synthesis of current discourses. Innocence dominates the various discourses in which children are positioned as immature, ignorant, vulnerable and at risk of abuse. The assumption is that children should not know about sex because sex is adult business. Connecting threads of religious (notably Christian) and philosophical discourses, childhood has been constructed as a deterministic biological stage within a natural development. Normalised as such, children are positioned within a binary relationship against adults where adults hold the dominant position.

Adults, within this deterministic framework, therefore act for and on behalf of children, since children are unable to think and act maturely. By taking particular views of children as at risk, a risk mentality over time produces moral panics. Fears related to child masturbation, promiscuity and more recent access to sexuality information via electronic means, see specific legislative regulations created for children and adults, with effects for them in families and schools.

Parents and teachers, over time, are positioned as responsible in children's lives for their development as good, healthy, and heteronormative citizens.

Using poststructuralist theory, a discursive approach to childhood offers a different perspective. Located within social and cultural constructions of childhood, notions of innocence are deconstructed to produce questions about potential harm for children from ideas of innocence, and also possibilities for recognising children's agency. Children can know about sex as children, and approach knowledge of sex/sexuality without being at risk. Childhood is now, more than ever, under surveillance. Practices in response to notions of parental and teacher responsibility fashion further regulation and governance of children. Childhood is a particular site of panoptic supervision concerning sexuality.

A clear socio-political narrative links performatives of childhood and sexuality to current discursive constructions of heteronormative gender and power relations. As such, this narrative has recounted ideas and practices that identify the antecedents of today's sociocultural expressions of sexuality and childhood, and the multiple discourses framing education and social policies, as well as family life and parenting. In this setting, the research questions for this study respond to areas that emerged in the literature which have not been covered above and describe the gap in literature regarding adults' governance and regulation of children's sexuality.

Researching the secret: Constructing research questions

The aim for this study is to provide new insights into sexuality and childhood for both academic and professional audiences. I hope that this knowledge may be

taken into practice contexts for parents and professionals (counsellors and teachers) in their relationships with children and families.

In keeping with the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2, and from the review of literature in Chapters 3 and 4, my research questions take up a discursive inquiry into childhood sexuality. Utilising Butler's notion of the inseparability of gender/sexuality, I am interested in a Foucauldian analysis of power relations within gendered constructions of sexuality in childhood. I am also interested to explore childhood and sexuality discourses that highlight the place of innocence and developmental determinism within performative language about childhood sexuality. These questions also explore how the secrecy of sexuality is reiterated within adult/child relationships through gender performativity, and how developmental ideas of childhood maintain sexuality as a secret, that children (should) have no idea or interest. Through analysing the talk from interviews with participants, these questions aim to understand the ways in which sexuality is objectivised as a means to control children's bodies. At the same time, noting Foucault's description of discourses as tactical elements, I remain open to the possibility of different and opposing discourses within the deployment of sexuality. The research questions (see p. 18) therefore produce the areas for analysis of participants' talk in the light of the research literature.

Chapter 5

A discursive methodology

This chapter describes the study's methodology, methods of inquiry, and analysis. It bridges the conceptual and theoretical discussions in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 and the findings and analysis of participants' talk in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. In response to the research questions presented at the end of Chapter 4, it includes details that align with social constructionist theories of knowledge production, selection of participants, and production of findings.

There are four sections. I first describe the methodological approach, linking with the study's conceptual framework. Second, I explain what I did, defining the methods of inquiry, including the vignettes used in research interviews with individuals and groups. The rationale for individual and group interviews is also explained, and the participants in this research are introduced. Third, I reflect on issues of ethics. A poststructuralist approach to research ethics is described, that is, in this research, a reflexive process and one that involves relational practices. Lastly, I focus on the methods of analysis. Using concepts presented in Chapter 2, a Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis is presented as the approach to the analysis of participant findings. Butlerian gender analysis, using her language of performativity and concepts from the gender matrix, also contributes to this approach.

5.1 Discourse analysis: Deconstructing force relations of power

The study is designed to be consistent with the theoretical framing developed for this work (Chapter 2). Grounded in feminist poststructuralist concerns, the research analyses socio-political and sexuality/gender discourses. In this project, childhood and sexuality are viewed through lenses of both poststructuralist and social constructionist perspectives. Here, the language that constitutes children's subjectivities in relation to adult participants is interrogated for its relations of power through a Foucauldian approach. Foucault's (1978/1990) research in sexuality refers to a shift in thinking in Western society after the seventeenth century, whereby "sex became a 'police' matter" (p. 24). Sex was policed by moral and political forces that utilised a social and cultural gaze on adults, families and children. Foucault describes this policing as, "...the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses" (1978/1990, p. 25). Specifically, the focus on children resulted in the particular watching of their individual and social physical actions. "In the case of children's sex...the boisterous laughter that had accompanied the precocious sexuality of children for so long – and in all social classes... – was gradually stifled" (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 27). Robinson acknowledges Foucault's argument that "sexuality [had become] a field of vital strategic importance...to regulate and discipline individual's sexual behaviours...and...the biological processes of procreation in populations" (Robinson, 2012, pp. 261-262).

In the shifting grounds of globalisation, migration and plurality, poststructuralist theory provides a conceptual framework through which to examine complexities and uncertainties of childhood sexuality, in particular in

calling upon ethical positions that question who decides these truths about norms, and how they are constructed. B. Davies (1993) uses the metaphor of fractured glass. “It is not until the glass fractures or breaks, for example that we focus differently” (p. 153), since “we generally disattend discourse” as we “disattend the pane of glass in order to look at the view out the window” (p. 153). To fracture discourse, the methods of analysis include writing as “a method of inquiry” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), and writing as a method of nomadic inquiry (St. Pierre, 1997). Through troubling and fracturing of discourses about childhood and sexuality, the analysis aims to understand “the effects of power generated by what was said...[and]...define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 11). Analysis then, is the undertaking of surveying and mapping “cultural facts characterising our culture” (Foucault, 1967/1999, p. 91).

The task of this research is to explore possible meaning and present this as partial, subjective and reflexive knowledge. A postmodern research approach is further used as it constructs knowledge as emerging and open to possibilities from localised and specific experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Research using postmodern and postpositivist ideas is not a linear process nor does it identify stages that have an order in logic (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Within postmodern research, validity and reliability are positioned as deliberately transgressive (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lather, 1993, 2007; Scheurich, 1996). Scheurich (1996, p. 56) refers to a “play of difference” and St. Pierre (2011, p. 611) to a “post qualitative research” that calls for a different ontology. Lather regards validity within the postmodern as “scandalous” (1993) and that validity after poststructuralism is “transgressive validity” (2007). She further explores an

aporia, or impass, of legitimisation, naming the idea of validity in qualitative research as problematic (Lather, 2006).

Feminist poststructuralist analysis: Deconstructing gendered power relations

Drawing upon B. Davies' (1991) theory on positioning, and particularly gender positioning, this analysis includes exploring how persons are swimming within a range of discursive currents. Connecting closely to this work is Lather's (1991) notion of collapsing the "concepts of 'disinterested' knowledge and referential innocent notions of language" (p. 6). Queer theory also contributes to this analysis. Jagose (1996), highlighting Foucault's thinking, explains that "sexuality is not an essentially personal attribute but an available cultural category" (p. 79). She provides a connection with Butler's theory, noting that "[h]eterosexuality is naturalised by the performative repetition of normative gender identities" (p. 85). Alongside discourses on sexuality, constructions of childhood are troubled as messy, complicated and queer (A. Taylor, 2013a).

5.2 Methods of inquiry – How to explore the research questions

This study reflects perceptions of knowledge inquiry and knowledge construction as a collaborative process in which multiple understandings are possible (see Chapter 2). The study focuses on childhood and uses inquiry with significant adults who care for children. It does not include the voices of children. Children's absence from this study is now briefly explained.

The absence of children in research

There are a number of references to the absence of children's voices in research (e.g., Uprichard, 2010) and in research related to children's sexuality (e.g., Bancroft, 2003, 2004; Money, 1986). A number of poststructuralist researchers remark on the need for children to be actively involved and included in sexuality research of children – that is, children's views, their understandings, their experiences (Mitchell, 2005; Robinson, 2013; Sparrman, 2014). Robinson (2013) argues for the value of children's inclusion in sexuality research for two reasons: support for children and knowledge of children's subjectivities. The initial design for this research included inviting child participants. A number of reasons for not consenting children to participate were given by parents and a school board, including:

- discomfort with someone coming in to talk to their children;
- concerns about the effect the conversations could have on the children and playground discussions that could follow;
- perceptions that the research offered no advantage for their children;
- lack of conviction about the purpose of the research or its value with such small numbers involved.

In one sense, through parents and the school board not consenting to allow children to participate, adults silenced children. In another sense, the secret of child sexuality was re-constructed, children could not speak about what they know. A number of researchers have similarly identified various reasons that parents have declined consent for their children's participation: the time involved in research, parents not recognising research value, media-fuelled panics about false abuse claims, and parental level of education. Fortenberry and Jenkins (both

cited in Bancroft, 2003) comment on the difficulty in obtaining parents' consent for children's participation in sexuality research. Fortenberry argues that, in addition to the time it takes to be involved, researchers "have to be more proactive in promoting research as the public good and perhaps a social responsibility" (Bancroft, 2003, p. 62). Jenkins remarks on the effect of panic resulting from media coverage and stereotypes.

In studying refusals to participate, I wonder if one factor might be media coverage, or media stereotypes...and the suggestion is, if you allow your children to be interviewed about sex then the interviewers are likely to evolve bogus charges of child sexual abuse. (Bancroft, 2003, p. 63)

Friedrich's (2003) study, on sexuality in 'non-abused' children in the United States, concludes that parental ideas of what behaviours were sexual could be correlated to social class. He states that "more educated parents would volunteer behaviors as sexual; less educated parents had not thought of or categorized their child's behavior as sexual" (p. 64). Levels of education therefore could appear to affect rates for parental consent.

In her study with children aged 9 to 12 years, Sparrman (2014) discusses access and gatekeeping in child sexuality research. She encourages researchers to reflect on relational processes to produce interest in the research by those who act as gatekeepers. She raises questions about the problematic aspect of what research in children's sexuality might examine, and proposes this can include 'mess' in ethics and methods. Sparrman suggests, "The sensitive nature ascribed to such research has less to do with the topic than with the relationships between the topic and its social context" (p. 295). She finds that teachers perceived children to be interested in the topic, and for herself as the researcher, that children are

knowledgeable. Parents in her study were focussed on the protection of children. Sparrman concludes that a solid discourse around sex-negativity sustains the notion of children and sexuality as too sensitive for research including children. She calls, however, for an understanding and change of the power relations between children and adults. This study also considers the power relations between children and adults in sexuality discourses.

Giving voice to children in this research

While children did not participate in this research as respondents, the focus was nonetheless on children's experience and adults' interpretation, understanding and responses. Without children's voices included directly in the research findings, Corsaro's (2011) call for researchers to "give voice to children's concerns and provide detailed descriptions and interpretations as children live their childhoods" (p. 52) can, nonetheless be taken up. Corsaro invites researchers to be open to "what children can teach us and tell us about ... their struggles to gain some control over more powerful adults and adult rules" (2011, p. 52) and possibilities of children's experience and struggle are presented through the vignettes developed for this research. These vignettes were informed by children and their experiences, which they shared within counselling. The unstructured questions asked during interview sessions gave the participants the chance to include remembered voices of children, as they told their personal stories in response to several vignettes.

The sites selected for research interviews purposely included child-focussed settings: two schools and a counselling agency that worked with children as clients. In the Prologue and in Chapter 1, the practice of counselling children

was positioned as potentially shaping children's behaviour according to particular social and cultural norms, without attention to practices of power relations (K. Crocket, 2012; Cushman, 1990; Furedi, 2003; Kaye, 1999; Rose, 1990; Sinclair & Monk, 2005; Waldegrave, 1985; Waldegrave et al., 2003). So too, in Chapter 3, education sites for children were located as places of normative developmentalism, especially related to gender and heteronormativity (Burke, 2011; B. Davies, 1993; Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 1996, 2001; A. Taylor, 2013b; Wardman, 2017). The selection of schools and a counselling agency provided access to adult participants who engage daily with children and concerns that children experience. Inviting research participants from these three sites allowed for a range of adults involved in children's lives, thus producing interviews that would give rich material for analysis of discourse. Before introducing the participants, I first describe the methods selected for inquiry: vignettes and interviews.

Using vignettes as research method: Sensitivity and ethical practice

Vignettes were used within this project as a form of ethical, sensitive and discursive practice. Finch (1987) describes vignettes as "short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances" (p. 105). Vignettes offer concrete examples of human experience, and invite participants to respond to these (Barter & Renold, 2000). Barter and Renold (2000) also call for "authentic" vignettes, based on actual scenarios, so that participants understand the breadth of possible experiences.

I hoped that vignettes might provide space for participants to be open about their opinions and thoughts in response to the vignette events. The potential, according to Schoenberg and Ravdal (2000), is that vignettes provide a safe distance for people who might find it difficult to discuss or explore sensitive topics. Talk about sexuality can be difficult for some people (Wight, 1993, 1996), and is described by Gagnon and Simon (1973) as a move toward a “totalitarian land of silence” (p. 105). Although dated, Gagnon and Simon’s comments suggest that there may be implications for my research which involve not only talking about sex, but about children and sex/sexuality. The hypothetical nature of vignettes, according to Barter and Renold (1999), therefore offers participants distance from personal experience, and allows them to explore sensitive topics in a less threatening way. A participant could also offer an imagined response to a scenario, such as what they would do or how people might respond as one of the vignette characters (Barter & Renold, 2000). There can also be space for participants to disclose personal information, if they so choose. The vignette method offers participants an agentic positioning over whether and when they might introduce personal experiential responses. Barter and Renold (2000) suggest that vignettes can be used across a range of participant groups, as, for example, in this study, with teachers, parents, and counsellors.

In order to explore the research questions (Chapter 4) vignettes were used so that:

- Participants would focus on real, specific events.
- A range of examples could be given for participants to explore widely their own perspectives.

- Participants might tell something of other stories (whether personal to themselves or someone closely connected, or of their professional experiences).
- Ideas connected with sexuality in childhood could be elicited.
- Discussion of vignettes with participants might bring forward speaking about gender and culture, or possibly other social discourses on childhood and sexuality.
- Ethical aspects of the elicited responses of participants to the vignettes might be raised in discussion.

Constructing vignettes: (De)constructing discourse

The six vignettes developed for this study emerged from my professional counselling practice. They detail incidents of children's actions described by adults as sexually 'inappropriate'. These vignettes of 'sexually precocious' actions of urinating, kissing, nudity, genital touching and talking about intercourse, were chosen for the threads of discursive regimes and practices they offer.

The vignettes were trialled with people involved in the consultation and piloting phases of the study, and then developed into the format used for the interviews. During the piloting phase, I was asked to clarify aspects of the vignettes, for example: the children's ages, where exactly were they (e.g., in the classroom or outside, and where outside), and to repeat details of the story. These questions substantiated the authenticity of the vignettes as a method and how they were constructed for the interviews. The six vignettes used in this study are presented in Appendix A. They are summarised here, as stories about:

1. A 5-year-old boy who urinates in the school playground;

2. Two 8-year-old children who kiss in the school playground;
3. A 5-year-old boy who pulls his pants down in the classroom;
4. A 5-year-old girl who rubs herself between her legs at school⁹;
5. A 9-year-old boy who touches another boy's penis in the school toilet;
6. A 7-year-old boy who tells a 6-year-old girl about sex at school.

Each vignette was read aloud to participants in the interviews with individuals and groups. Particular sections of participants' responses were then selected for analysis that highlighted specific discursive practices in language and thought.

Interviews as process of knowledge production

Interviews are a sensitive and powerful method: they are, in themselves, neither ethical nor unethical .. A key issue concerns who obtains access and who has the power and resources to act on and consume what the multiple voices tell the interviewing stranger. (Kvale, 2006, p. 497)

Individual interviews

Interviewing is not a neutral activity (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Scheurich, 1995). Fontana and Frey (2005) argue that, "it is inextricably and unavoidably historically, politically, and contextually bound" (p. 695). Noting power asymmetries that exist within research interviews with the dominant position of the interviewer, Kvale (2006) alerts researchers that these dialogues require particular attention to ethical concerns. He describes power dynamics within "the

⁹ Subsequent to the participant interviews, in a discussion with my supervisory panel, we questioned the wording in Vignette #4 understanding that the language of 'rubbing oneself between one's legs' is euphemistic. In hindsight, this could have been more clearly described as 'rubbing on the crotch area'. I take this discussion up further within the findings in Chapter 8, and as one of the limitations of the study, in Chapter 9.

social construction of knowledge in interviews” (p. 480) and recommends that “ethics becomes as important as methodology in interview research” (p. 497). Ethical care is required within the “close personal interactions...and the potentially powerful knowledge produced” (p. 497), since the researcher interprets, represents and creates knowledge through this process. Noting that, “The qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge” (p. 2), Kvale (1996) states that, “An interview is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 2). Fontana and Frey (2005) raise “reflexive concerns about the ways in which the researcher influences the study, both in the methods of data collection and in the techniques of reporting findings” (p. 709). They cite Warren’s (2000, in Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 718) reflection that “[i]n the social interaction of the qualitative interview, the perspectives of the interviewer and the respondent dance together for the moment but also extend outward in social space and backward and forward in time”.

The use of an interview method with individual participants offered them space to respond to the vignettes in a context of safety and privacy. Some participants might consider sharing information within the privacy of one-to-one interviews where they could reflect on particular and personal stories. The context of a group might not afford this safety or privacy for some people to share in that way.

Attending to the dynamics of power relations in interviewing, I was aware of possible effects of the research on participants. It could provide new thinking or understanding for adult participants and the researcher, thereby having effects for parents, and for teachers and counsellors. There could also be potential effects of

making discursive positioning of gender and education more visible for participants. For example, how might some people respond to a middle-aged man asking questions about children and sexuality? Fontana and Frey (2005) also comment on considering gender within the context of the interview. As a reflexive researcher, I gave consideration to the potential awkwardness for women being interviewed by a man about sexuality. Lastly, the privilege and status of higher education could position researcher and participants problematically during an interview for a doctoral thesis. These are power dynamics that require attention in both the interview and in analysis of the interview data.

Group interviews

Focus groups, a specific type of group interview (Fontana & Frey, 2005), originated in quantitative studies and have developed as a major method within qualitative research (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Smithson's (2008) judgement is that focus groups are useful in postmodern research as a less-structured way of uncovering discourses and narratives. Barbour (2007) warns about competition between participants when the intention is to elicit individual narratives but also recommends that groups could encourage 'reluctant' participants, where an individual interview might be experienced as intimidating. However, Barbour (2007) concedes that narrative can be more easily elicited through smaller group size. The study design planned for three groups of no more than six people. The three groups in this study numbered between four to seven participants, which appeared to allow some individuals to share their personal narratives.

Two key considerations about the process of group interviews appear in the research literature: about the gathering of information and about the

interaction between participants (Barbour, 2007). A further area questions how participant contributions are analysed: whether as individual stories or as the production of a conversation within a group process. These considerations are accounted for in the findings where participant contributions relate both individual stories and the production of a conversation. The researcher position I adopted within the group interviews was primarily to facilitate discussion rather than to direct it (see Smithson, 2008) as participants in all three groups easily supported interaction between themselves.

Particular ethical considerations for group interviews include ideas that groups may not be suitable where personal information is sought (Smithson, 2008), for example regarding private issues such as sexuality. Barbour (2007) questions this assumption, suggesting that “the sensitivity of a topic is not fixed” (p. 18). Each participant will have a different idea of what constitutes a sensitive topic. Tolich (2009) questions how researchers who include focus groups in their research present ethical issues related to notions of confidentiality and anonymity, both in terms of participating in the group but also when the research is represented in publications and presentations. He calls for researchers to be transparent about the limitations to confidentiality and anonymity, to inform participants that they are invited to take up a relationship of trust with each other as well as the researcher, and what this might mean for their understanding of the group interview process as part of a larger study. How participants were invited into the study is now described.

Introducing participants: Interested co-researchers

The selection of participants included adults who were significant in children's lives: parents/caregivers, teachers, as well as counsellors/therapists¹⁰ who work with children. In the world of children's experience, these adults would hopefully offer various perspectives through which children's understandings of themselves and others in relation to relationships and sexuality are constructed. An explanation follows of the three phases used to develop processes for the study. First, a consultation phase in 2011 involved inquiry with schools (i.e., principals, teachers and parents) and with agencies (i.e., managers and therapists) about the research methods of vignettes and interviews, and about ideas for accessing participants. Second, a pilot phase in 2012 involved participants who trialled the information sheets, consent forms and interviews using the draft vignettes, and provided further feedback. Third, interviews occurred with individuals and groups in 2013/2014 using the developed information sheets (Appendix B), consent forms (Appendix C) and vignettes¹¹.

Consultancy phase

Attending to safety and ethical engagement was an important consideration for participants and the researcher in this study. A wide group of stakeholders was included within the consultative process leading into this project to support the ethical focus incorporated at the beginning, considering the potentially sensitive

¹⁰ From this point, the term *parents* includes caregivers and *therapists* includes those in a counselling role. The therapists who participated in this research identified with a range of disciplines: psychology, social work or counselling.

¹¹ An explanation is relevant for delayed completion of the project. During 2012 to 2016, my family and I cared for my elderly father in our home. His health deteriorated during 2015/2016. We continued to care for him at home until his passing, November 2016, aged 96 years.

nature of the study. I positioned myself as researcher within professional communities connected with this area of research, inviting them as consultants or co-researchers at the various phases.

In 2011, I met three primary school principals in their school to consult them about the project. These principals knew of my previous professional counselling work. I outlined in an email my hope that they might offer constructive and critical feedback on the study design and ideas for recruitment. One principal asked to invite others to join the consultation, and he included three other principals when we met at his school. Another principal invited her deputy and associate principals to attend the consultation, after which she said that they would like their school to be included in the study. They also wanted to develop a plan for professional development for the school staff in relation to the topic of children and sexuality. All six primary school principals consulted in this phase supported the research and offered feedback about the vignettes and processes for inviting participants. They spoke of seeing value in the study as each of them had experience of responding to events of children's sexual behaviour within their time as principals in school communities. They saw this study as offering practical value for participants, both for teachers and parents. They also discussed the need for careful promotion and management of the study within a school. One principal told about a research project on healthy eating and food choices. He said that the study involved a school participating in a health promotion project focussing on preventing obesity in children but erroneously came to be known as the 'school with obesity issues'. An assumption had been made that the research was responding to a problem in the school. The principals and I agreed how care was necessary within this project to protect a participating school, and to be clear

that the research was not focussed on the school and its systems but on accessing potential participants through the school. We did not want any identification of a 'participating' school as having 'sexual problems'.

A further aspect of this consultancy phase involved four primary school teachers. A teacher who is an acquaintance expressed interest in my research and asked how it was progressing. I discussed the consultation phase with her and said that I would like to include teachers and parents. When asked if I might consult with her about the project, she offered to invite a number of colleagues. I met with these four teachers, who are also parents, one afternoon after school and discussed the research.

I asked for feedback on the vignette method and checked with principals and teachers in both the consultation and pilot phases about the scenarios. Commentators included the six primary school principals, one deputy and one associate principals, and four classroom teachers all consulted within the consultancy phase. All of these people also identified as parents. Commentators read initial drafts of the Information Sheet and Consent Forms as well as the vignettes. Responding as both education professionals and as parents, they commented on the research and the draft vignettes. I asked them about how the vignettes might work and what problems they might foresee, including whether they had any suggestions to improve or develop the vignettes. All commentators provided feedback that the vignettes appeared to offer a structured and safe process to explore ideas about children's sexuality without causing discomfort to participants. I also asked about the processes to approach or recruit teachers and parents in schools using, for example, a flyer to advertise the study within the

local principals' newsletter. The offer by one school principal to include their school in the study made the idea of advertising the project redundant.

Piloting phase

Checking the processes of ways to invite potential participants and the drafted vignettes as a method was then taken into a phase with pilot participants. In 2012, I met again with the four teachers who I had consulted (a group of three and with one individually) and two parents (a couple) who read through the Information Sheet and Consent Form, read and responded to the vignettes. This included processes of sharing information for informed consent, the consent form, exploring the ways in which pilot participants and I negotiated the structure of the process, and trialling the interviews. The pilot participants did not become participants in the individual and group interviews, but they agreed that interview findings from the pilot interviews could be included for the study. Barbour (2007), in reference to 'preliminary focus groups' (used to support development of items for questionnaires or survey instruments), warned that when focus groups are used for this preliminary purpose, they "are not always recorded or subjected to detailed analysis" (p. 16). He suggested that this could be a "missed opportunity in terms of providing data that might prove to be helpful, for example, in furnishing explanations for anomalous findings..." (p.16). The pilot group in this study was recorded and transcribed, and this enabled development of the process and content of what became the structure for the group interviews. This pilot interview material, however, has not been included in the findings of this thesis.

Once again, there was value in attending to the ethics of how this piloting process occurred, including how the receiving context of the interviews was

established. These phases of consultation and piloting did not only support robustness in the sharing of information, but contributed to preparing for safety of both participants and researcher. These phases also provided support for me regarding my positioning within the project in relation to participants.

Interview participants

There were 28 participants included in the third phase of this study, selected through their connection within one of three settings, described below.

Participants selected for the interviews were different from those engaged in the pilot. Interviews were held individually with 17 participants, and four of these individuals comprised one of the groups interviewed (therapists). The remaining eleven participants participated in the other two group interviews (teachers and parents). Participants were asked to self-identify according to gender and culture (see Table 1, next page). Of these, 25 were female and three were male. There was a range of cultural identifications, with eighteen identified as Pākehā (i.e., a New Zealander of European ethnicity) or “European” (including one who used ‘Kiwi’ and another, Australian); five participants did not identify their cultural identity; three identified as Māori; and one each identified as Pacific Islander and Chinese.

Two of the interview settings were large primary schools. There was interest in this project by principals and Boards of Trustees for researching sexuality of children around this age group – for the opportunity for learning from participation, and for the contribution that teachers and parents of children of this age could make to the research. The third setting, a counselling agency in a larger city, was selected to include a range of ideas from therapists and parents involved with children who had been referred to counselling because of ‘sexual behaviour’.

Table 1: Summary of information on participants

Research Setting	Interview: Group/Individual	Participant Identity	Gender Male/Female	Cultural Identity¹²
South School	Teacher group	Teacher	Male	Not identified
		Teacher	Female	Not identified
		Teacher	Female	Not identified
		Teacher	Female	Not identified
	Parent group	Parent	Female	NZ European
		Parent	Female	Māori
		Parent	Female	NZ European
		Parent	Male	NZ European
		Parent	Female	Euro/Pacific Is
		Parent	Female	Pākehā NZer
		Parent	Female	NZ European
	Individual interviews	Teacher	Female	NZ European
		Teacher	Female	Australian
North School	Individual interviews	Parent	Female	NewZealander
		Parent	Female	NZ Pākehā
		Parent	Female	Chinese
	Individual interviews	Begin Tcher ¹³	Female	NewZealander
		Begin Tcher	Male	Pākehā
		Begin Tcher	Female	NewZealander
Community Agency	Therapists: 6 individual interviews and * 1 group of 4 interview	Therapist*	Female	Pākehā
		Therapist*	Female	NZ Pākehā
		Therapist*	Female	NZ Pākehā
		Therapist*	Female	Māori
		Therapist	Female	Pākehā
		Therapist	Female	Not identified
	Individual interviews	Parent	Female	NZer / Kiwi
		Parent	Female	NZ Māori
		Parent	Female	NZ Pākehā
Totals over 3 settings	17 individual and 3 group interviews	9 teachers 13 parents 6 therapists	25 females 3 males	18 European 5 not identified 3 Māori 1 Pacific Is 1 Chinese

¹² Participants of European descent self-identified using a range of descriptors: New Zealander, European, NZ European, Pākehā, Kiwi and Australian.

¹³ Beginning Teachers have completed an approved Initial Teacher Education programme, have provisional certification and must complete between two to six years appraised teaching experience before gaining full certification with the Teaching Council New Zealand Matatū Aotearoa. See <https://www.educationcouncil.org.nz/content/beginning-teachers>

South School was included following the consultation phase when a principal asked that that school be included. Participants from South School included four teachers in a group interview, two teachers in individual interviews, and a group interview with seven parents.

North School was invited to include teachers who were less experienced. Three Beginning Teachers were selected who were within their first two years of professional teaching, and working towards registration with the Teaching Council New Zealand Matatū Aotearoa. North School also provided access to recruit three parents for individual interviews.

Community Agency was invited as a community-based counselling agency serving a city and rural region. Six therapists agreed to participate and these represented a range of helping disciplines, namely counselling, social work and psychology. Three parents of children who had accessed support through the agency in response to ‘problematic sexual behaviour’, and had completed counselling, were identified and invited by the agency to consider participation in the study. These parents were provided the Information sheet before meeting with the researcher, and were given space to discuss any questions with the researcher prior to consenting to the study.

Individual interviews

Individual interviews were designed to be up to 60 minutes in length. I interviewed 17 individual participants. Five of the participants were teachers interviewed across 2013/2014. Two were experienced teachers from South School, and three were Beginning Teachers from North School, i.e., newly graduated but had not yet completed their two-year certification period. Six

participants were therapists from Community Agency, interviewed in 2013. Six further participants were parents interviewed across 2013/2014. Three were connected to the Counselling Agency and the other three parent participants were from North School.

In each interview, a private room was available for the interviews; an office in each of the schools and a counselling room in the Counselling Agency. I used two recording devices to ensure capture of recording (in the event one recorder might fail) and to support clarity of the spoken word when listening afterwards. After introducing myself, by giving some of my background in counselling practice and teaching in counsellor education, I described where my interest in researching childhood sexuality had originated. I then asked the participant about why they had accepted the invitation to participate, and whether they had any questions about the process and about what would happen to their material. Participants described a range of reasons for participation including professional as well as personal interest. Bailey, a caregiver in a parental role, reflected on why she accepted the invitation to participate.

Bailey: I'm currently studying in the social sector [and] do a little bit of youth work. I work with, I guess, a number of children where sexual abuse has probably been an issue in their family. It's actually a subject that interests me, yeah.

Researcher: So, this is an opportunity for?

Bailey: I don't know, maybe just knowledge to be shared

Jess, a Beginning Teacher, reflected toward the end of the interview about what her participation meant for her.

Jess: It's real interesting

Researcher: What interests you about it?

Jess: It actually – well, to actually have to stop and think about things like that, ‘cause you just go and do what you have to do. And then these situations pop up and you’re like – But to actually have to sit down and think, what would I do? Would I [truncates sentence] – yeah.

Jenny, another Beginning Teacher also reflected later on in the interview:

Researcher: How’s this process been for you?

Jenny: An eye-opener

Researcher: An eye-opener?

Jenny: Yeah, just that [pause] You always think that things like that would happen, but you never really think about what you would do if it happened. And you don’t really get taught like, at uni. Or no-one’s ever really sat down [and said], ‘If this happens...’ And like here [at school] – totally not anything. But like, if anything happens, you’re meant to just take them straight to management but what do you do instantly? Like what would I do instantly if this happened? Like I know that I can’t deal with it but how do you go forward to...

These participants acknowledged the value of the research for them professionally as a process of gaining new information and for their personal reflection related to professional contexts.

I explained to each participant that if they wanted to seek some support following the interview I had information about counselling services available and made this information available to each participant. The vignettes were then read

out aloud by me, one at a time, for each participant to listen to and respond.

Where a vignette comprised more than one section, I read each part allowing time for participants to respond between each section (see Appendix A).

Group interviews

Group interviews were designed to be between 60 and 90 minutes long. Three groups were interviewed in 2013. First, a group of four teachers in South School; secondly, a group of seven parents from South School; and lastly, a group of four therapists from the Counselling Agency. Participants in the groups also shared about what value they found for themselves discussing the vignettes together. Some of the therapists' group reflected on personal and professional benefit for them, as three of their comments indicate:

...[S]o much of the research on children's work is all from the Northern Hemisphere. That's why it's really exciting and want to support you in this. (Therapist A)

...[There is] the value of having time to reflect on the conversations, that aren't clinically-based – you know, we come together [for] case reviews...but there's little time and space to be able to offer support. But this was interesting, hearing the value of just being able to talk about children and sexuality, yeah. I think that the languaging is quite key to provide people with a language of how to talk about sexual stuff. (Therapist B)

I have enjoyed this opportunity to have the dialogue with other clinicians...I wonder if there's some value in having a process like this for orienting [new] clinicians...a discussion about different ideas, different positions, different ways of looking at this...and conversations that we don't have the time to sit and have and reflect on. (Therapist C)

As with the individual interviews, I read out the vignettes for the group interviews, one at a time, for group participants to listen to and respond. Where a vignette comprised more than one section, I read each part allowing for participants to respond between each section. The group interviews were quite dynamic since people in each group knew all the other participants. The discussions were not at all stilted. The familiarity of participants to each other, within their respective groups, positioned them well for engaging as active contributors. The one exception to this was the male participant in the parents' group. While he did contribute, his was less than the six women who started and continued a lively conversation.

Transcription and checking

All interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber. There were 20 transcripts (17 individual interviews and 3 group interviews). Transcripts of individual interviews were sent to sixteen of the seventeen individual participants for checking. One participant opted out of receiving the transcript and permitted its use in the research without their checking it. While most replied saying that they had no changes of their transcripts, three people asked for pieces to be deleted from their transcript as they considered the material was private and

should not be made available for possible analysis. The interview participants were given different names as pseudonyms. Summaries of the three group interviews were made by the researcher and sent to the respective 15 group participants for their comments and feedback. These summaries included sections of transcript without identifying the speaker.

Transcribing is a form of interpretation. I chose not to use conversational techniques of transcription, as my purpose was to understand participants' descriptions through talk in interaction. The method of transcription I have used is verbatim, or orthographic transcription (Braun & Clarke, 2013), "which focuses on transcribing spoken words" (p. 162) of *what* was said rather than attention to how it was said. After that I engaged in a reading of the transcripts, as Braun and Clarke (2013) describe, for "looking at what the language does" (p. 187). The purpose of focussing in more detail on what language does in the transcript text was to read what was said in the light of the theoretical approach of this research (in Chapter 2) and literature presented in Chapters 3 and 4. The transcripts were read and the recordings listened to a number of times by me, and areas of interest were noted and discussed within supervision. Through reading and re-reading, and repeated listening to the interviews, a number of themes and possible directions for analysis emerged.

5.3 Ethics: Reflexive and relational practices

Negotiating between theory and practice is a part of ethical research. Methods of inquiry and analysis were selected to coherently and ethically align between researcher and research consultants and participants. Ethical care included the use of language for informed consent and extended to careful use of participant

information and materials. Postmodern approaches to ethics in human research highlight relational aspects of people engaging in knowledge production, and how people's knowledge is (re)produced. My curiosity for this project began within professional counselling practice, about how sexuality in childhood might be understood, and responded to, by adults (see Prologue). Research ethics are here viewed as relational. This approach positions the researcher in relation to a researcher-self and in relation to research consultants and participants.

Ethics as reflexive practice

[R]eflexivity is a helpful conceptual tool for understanding both the nature of ethics in qualitative research and how ethical practice in research can be achieved. (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, pp. 262-263)

Connecting Guillemin and Gillam's (2004) ideas above, of the 'nature' and 'practice' of ethics in research, research using poststructuralist theory necessarily includes ideas and practices from a researcher's various subjectivities. In Chapter 1, comment was given on relations of power within the practice of counselling. Ideas from narrative counselling, of collaboration and practices of deconstructing discourse, are also brought into this research. Taking up a researcher position included counsellor knowledge, alongside knowledge from being a parent and a school trustee and counsellor educator and a member of an ethics review committee. Design of this project, of methods and effects, was an exercise in ethical reflexivity. According to Guillemin and Gillam (2004), reflexivity is an "ethical notion" (p. 262) in research. Reflexivity offers spaces to question intentions, including in the context of this project, negotiating tensions in gender positioning as a male researcher (Flanagan, 2015) and thinking about safety

within the research context for participants (Flanagan, 2014a). Reflexive researchers also reflect on their own safety in the light of experiences of researcher vulnerability (Coles & Mudaly, 2010; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2008; Horton, 2001, 2008). Reflexive ethical practice in research, as Horton (2008) defined, is “a personal, everyday, ever-present responsibility” (p. 367).

Within the setting of research, ethics therefore becomes more than adherence to moral codes, but a reflexive process for the researcher-self, assessing relations of power within research moments: for example, throughout the design, ethical review, participant selection, interviews, analysis and representation of findings. This approach to ethics is referred to by Lynch (2016) as “a shift from a code-oriented morality to an ethics- or subjectivity-oriented morality” (p. 140). One procedural moment in the research process that focuses on ethics is the application to the ethics committee, a process viewed here as substantively consultative (Flanagan, 2012) rather than simply procedural.

Consulting the Ethics Committee

Ethics is now seen as a *practice* which bridges the gap between anticipation and reflection... In this sense our qualitative research can be ethical right through the research. (Parker, 2005, p. 19)

Parker’s words, while focussed on process, nonetheless, corresponds to an approach to ethics as beyond compliance with codes, described here as a practice of the researcher-self.

The application for ethical approval of this study, from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee, was informed by personal and

professional experience. Aware of discourses around childhood vulnerability, moral panic and institutional risk aversion, the proposal for this project was designed with care for the potential sensitive nature of the research topic, and a variety of perspectives received from personal friends and professional colleagues.

An outline was presented to the ethics committee for a three-phase design, initially using the title, '(De)Constructions of childhood sexuality, normality and therapy: A narrative critique of ideas and practices in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context'. Phase 1 involved engaging initially in a process of consultation; Phase 2, piloting the research vignettes and interviews; and then Phase 3, the group and individual interviews to collect data for analysis. This plan responded to a number of ethical factors including researcher safety; the integrity of an approach that held a robustness of acceptability to school and agency management; and an opportunity to explore the possibilities, and iron out possible risks. The initial proposal included children as potential research participants. The researcher-position taken in submitting the application to the ethics committee was one of engaging in a consultative process of professional and collegial dialogue (see Tolich et al., 2016).

The consultation phase was proposed because of concerns about potential risk. I considered that having ethics approval prior to the consultation phase offered advantages to the research, by including consultation within a transparent process and the approval of the ethics committee. This helped shape the ethical relations of power within the research activity: considering possible effects for a school community, for the teaching staff, for relations between teachers and parents, and for children in relationship to parents, teachers and peers.

Within individual interviews, I intended that the research could engage in particular knowledge production about children and sexuality, with awareness of the limitations of participants' identity and contexts. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity for participants were considered a fundamental requirement for this setting of producing knowledge. I also prepared for the possibility of responding and managing participant disclosure of information that might result in distress, or the possibility of disclosure of information related to potential legal responses for child protection and safety of participants and others. A selection of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form are provided in Appendices B and C. In the event an interview triggered some response for a participant, they were provided contact information for a range of counselling support services available within the local area. Participants were also informed that participation within research could possibly have unintended effects. With care for the confidential identity of individual participants, any participating school or agency also remained anonymous. Perception of, and reputation for, organisations was actively protected in the research process. The intention in this study on child sexuality was to keep school identities confidential within the writing of this project.

Potential effects were also carefully explored for researcher safety. Coles and Mudaly (2010) explored researcher vulnerability in research with children, and queried how researcher safety might be examined within an ethics review process prior to any research involving participants. The preparation for, and process of, involvement in a sensitive study was carefully considered (see Flanagan, 2012, 2014a). Horton's (2001, 2008) autoethnographical accounts consider ethical dilemmas where he experienced discomfort, and questioned his

own safety in the moment. Commenting on managing/responding to ethically challenging moments within the research process, Mudaly and Goddard (2009) considered this a necessary function of ethics review. I particularly reflected on gendered positioning as a male researcher in this study (Flanagan, 2015). The ethics committee did express a concern for researcher safety, when interviewing children. This, however, became a moot point, as no children took part as participants in this study. (The Committee's approval letter is appended in Appendix D).

5.4 Methods of analysis: Interpretive and critical

The poststructuralist agenda of this project worked to isolate “material verbal traces left by history” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 133) that surfaced within the ideas and practices of language. It was an exercise in cultural history that identified the production and reproduction of childhood sexuality discourse. Foucauldian discourse analysis and feminist poststructuralist analysis were used in the analysis of participant responses to the vignettes (Chapters 6 to 8). This section outlines the approach that was taken in selecting and analysing sections of transcripts from participants’ responses to the vignettes presented in their interviews.

Discourse analysis in this study asks how power/knowledge relations and practices produce children’s multiple subjectivities around sexuality/gender. A. Y. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) identify that “[a] power/knowledge reading involves interpretations of interpretations, which are found in the significance of cultural practices” (p. 57). Undertaking this discourse analysis involved adopting Foucault’s use of archaeology and genealogy. Viewing text as discursive production, this analysis explored shards or fragments of text that speak to wider

discursive frameworks that both locate, and are located in, discursive frameworks.

Considering Derrida's (1967/1976) claim that nothing is ever outside of text, and that meaning is not fixed and is always open to interpretation, the analysis of text in this thesis is both limited and open. The analysis of text here, therefore, is an interpretive practice dependent upon what was selected and then how it was read and re-read. This selection and reading of text was primarily shaped by the discourses informed by the literature. The reading of text was also shaped through the lenses of my own discursive settings and associated histories. The reading of participant text for this thesis can be re-read differently, following Derrida's thinking, at a different time or in a different setting. Burman and Parker (1993) acknowledge that "reality, behaviour and subjectivity are always in texts" (p. 6). The analysis of reality, behaviour and subjectivity is not neutral or dissociated from the reader's own experience, but located within multiple discursive settings. As B. Davies (1994) reflects, any text always interlinks with other various texts, and Danzinger (1997) notes the inseparability of talk and text. Furthermore, Holstein and Gubrium (2005) note that "in Foucauldian terms, the goal [of interpretive practice] is to describe the interplay between institutional discourses and the "dividing practices" that constitute local subjectivities and their worlds of experience" (p. 493). Acknowledging that the reading of text can be shaped by the reader's own discursive positionings, discourses that are emphasised within the literature became the focus for the analytical reading of participants' text. However, such a reading was also open to possibilities of identification of further discourses.

Within this analysis of discourses, a social constructionist perspective was used to view social representations and social practices. Constructions of meaning

were explored to deconstruct threads of *material traces of history*, of discursive practices that govern and discipline sexuality in childhood. When doing this, selected shards or fragments of text provided linkage across participants, rather than each interview or group transcript being included. The findings chapters, therefore, do not include text from every participant's transcribed interview, but selected material that speaks to specific discourses shown in the literature and through participants' talk.

Given that there were 20 transcripts produced in this research, it was not possible to include all participants within the findings and analysis chapters. The nine individual participants whose talk is included in the findings and analysis chapters (Chapters 6 to 8), and participants in the parents' group, are listed in Table 2 on the next page.

In particular, fragments from two participants, Sammie's and Jayne's talk, are represented in each of the three findings chapters and fragments from Val's talk in two chapters. Six other individual participants' talk (Toni, Sandra, Patsy, Chris, Bailey and Maxine) and the parents' group are included across Chapters 7 and 8. Names were not highlighted to identify particular participants, but rather to acknowledge that the language used in their responses was significant in relation to the task of this research. What they say is constructed as discursive text, and while it is theirs, is it also not only theirs: it is text that is spoken in discourse and across discourse by many people, including some of the other participants. The participants who did not have their talk included in the findings for analysis said similar things to those whose talk is presented in Chapters 6 to 8.

Table 2: Summary of Research Participants included in Findings

Name (Pseudo -nym)	Gender and Cultural identity	Interview setting (Individual unless noted as in group)	Teacher/ Parent/ Therapist	Years as teacher or therapist	Number/age range of children at interview (in years)
Anne	Female / Māori	South School (group)	Parent	N/A	Four (adults)
Bailey	Female	Counselling Agency	Caregiver/ Parent	N/A	Four (7-16)
Chris	Male / Pākehā	North School	Beginning Teacher	1	One (1)
Grace	Female / Pākehā New Zealander	South School (group)	Parent	N/A	Two (8-16) Two adult stepchildren
Heather	Female / NZ European	South School (group)	Parent	N/A	Two (7-9)
Jayne	Female / Australian	South School	Teacher	20	Five (unknown)
Jenny	Female	North School	Beginning Teacher	<2	N/A
Jess	Female	North School	Beginning Teacher	<2	N/A
Joan	Female / NZ European	South School (group)	Parent	N/A	Two (11-14)
Liz	Female / NZ European	South School (group)	Parent	N/A	Two (6-8)
Marie	Female / European & Pacific Islander	South School (group)	Parent	N/A	Three (4-10)
Maxine	Female / NZ Pākehā	Counselling Agency	Therapist	14	Two (6-8)
Patsy	Female / New Zealander	North School	Parent	N/A	Two (7-9)
Sammie	Female / NZ Pākehā	North School	Parent	N/A	Three (4-9)
Sandra	Female / Pākehā	Counselling Agency	Therapist	17	Three (1-6)
Toni	Female / Asian	North School	Parent	N/A	Four (8-15)
Val	Female / NZ Pākehā	Counselling Agency	Therapist	10	One (6)

Chapters 6 to 8 present particular aspects of participant text related to discourses as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. These findings are presented and analysed in the

light of the poststructuralist theoretical approaches discussed in Chapter 2. A particular poststructuralist reading of text includes deconstructing effects of power relations, specifically for gender. Queer theory was applied to deconstruct that which tries to maintain and sustain normative practices, including gender, but also that of childhood. As such, the focus of this analysis included historical, cultural and social settings – both for the text itself, and for the discursive linkages of the text. For example, a teacher talking to me about a child's behaviour may be different from how the teacher talks to the child's parent(s). The teacher's gender may also have effects for how they talk to me as a male researcher, and how they talk to the child's mother or father. Therefore, the methods of analysis for this study include drawing upon a range of postmodern and poststructuralist ideas, bringing these together into a theoretical mix that is relevant to shifting grounds within research in a period of flux. These methods lean towards an interpretivist approach, yet one that is also critical and cautious to interpretivism. Geertz (1973) claimed that,

Believing...that man [sic] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (p. 5).

This analysis is interpretive, in search of meaning, and exposing “the cultural facts characterising our culture” (Foucault, 1967/1999, p. 91).

Foucault (1971/1984) considers that writing and knowledge can only be partial. Derrida (1967/1976) might argue knowledge is made for deconstruction and decomposition in a reflexive process of examining its own construction and

composition. The analysis of participant text responds to a range of inquiries that are informed by Foucault's (1978/1990) own questions:

What are the effects of power generated by what was said? What are the links between these discourses, the effects of power, and the pleasures that were invested in them? What knowledge (*savoir*) was formed as a result of this linkage? The object, in short, is to define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world. (p. 11)

Foucault's research maps relations of power. This study examines how power/knowledge relations produce children's sexed/gendered subjectivities.

Foucault (1978/1990) presents further questions:

[W]hat were the most immediate, the most local power relations at work? How did they make possible these kinds of discourse, and conversely, how were these discourses used to support power relations? How was the action of these power relations modified by their very exercise, entailing a strengthening of some terms and a weakening of others, with effects of resistance and counter-investments, so that there has never existed one type of stable subjugation, given once and for all? How were these power relations linked to one another according to the logic of a great strategy. (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 97)

Following Robinson and C. Davies (2015), this study employs a Foucauldian discourse analysis of the transcripts of individual and group interviews. It is in Robinson and C. Davies' claim that "[d]iscourse analysis provides a linguistic approach to an understanding of the relationship between language, knowledge,

ideology and power” (p. 176), that this project aims to make a significant contribution towards deconstructing discourses around child sexuality.

Analysing transcripts: Playing with textual fragments

Initially, I explored participants’ responses to each vignette, engaging in a reading of their text to see if any common theme or thread emerged. I collated the transcripts according to each of the six vignettes. Taking a discursive reading approach to participants’ material, and within supervision consultations, I decided to shift my focus from the vignettes. A focus on each vignette shaped a reading that could be behaviour-focussed and offer a lens that narrowed perspectives of discourse. Rather, through re-reading the text of transcripts apart from the specific vignette and in the light of the literature, discursive material was selected to show its broader effects of power relations. My reading of this material demonstrated a significant absence of safe spaces for all participants to talk about children and sex/sexuality, but the participants acknowledged the opportunity presented to them for the space in this research. I then selected fragments of this discursive material from transcripts that showed specific absences for participants to speak, such as the effects of language or not having a sense of safety to speak.

The selected fragments of text in the next three chapters are presented because they provide specific material for analysis of discourse. Fontana and Frey (2005) question how reflexive researchers might be in their interpretation of the interviews, including any improprieties, for example, and exclusion of data. They note how researchers have recently “come to grips with the reflexive, problematic, and sometimes contradictory nature of data and with the tremendous, if unspoken, influence of the researcher as author” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p.

714). The analysis of findings is shaped to respond to the research questions, how these have been responded to, and whether other questions emerge. The analysis involved reading and re-reading of transcripts, multiple consultations and conversations within supervision about understanding and multiple possibilities for meaning, and further reading of transcripts and theory. Using selected fragments of participant text produces a construction of knowledge that is subjectively fashioned according to my theorising. This methodology is therefore located in postmodern and poststructuralist thinking, using social constructionist theory to expose some of the constitutive effects of language that produce and reproduce discourses of power/knowledge. To accomplish this, specific text was explored and selected for what it might offer on childhood and sexuality discourses. In particular, Foucault's notions of discourse as practices that respond to, and shape, those things that are written and spoken about, were utilised within an analysis that focussed on relations of power in the text. Associated with a Foucauldian reading of text, I also drew upon Derridean ideas of deconstruction, and questions about meanings of text as partial and iterative. Building upon each of these approaches to interrogating the text, I made use of Butler's analysis of gender, including concepts of performativity in understanding some of the ways that language is reiterative in constructions of gender and subjectivity. Queer theory was also useful in exploring these analytical practices through its contribution to subverting those ideas that are dominant in meanings or constructions of childhood and sexuality.

Key ideas in Chapter 5

I have argued to locate this research within postmodern and social constructionist understandings of knowledge creation and representation. I have given a particular focus on fluidity and flexibility of language and meaning. The analysis makes use of Foucault's notion of discourse; Derrida's idea of deconstruction; and Butler's notion of performativity. My dialogue with material from participants' interviews formed the findings presented in Chapters 6 to 8. These three subsequent findings chapters describe and scrutinise discourses that are constituted and reconstituted in language. These chapters examine adult stories and descriptions of children and sex/sexuality in response to some of the vignettes used in the research. Prior to these findings chapters, the reader may be interested in reading through the vignettes which are presented in full in Appendix A as they were used for the research interviews.

Analysing participants' talk around childhood sexuality, the findings in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 respond to these questions. These chapters expose the effects of language that produce regimes of power-knowledge that regulate and discipline children's knowledge as knowing and experience. In Chapter 6, analysis of relations of power that are traditionally and currently dominated by heterosexual and male positioning as socially and biologically entitled, connects to theorising sex/gender/sexuality. Here I draw from Butler's notion of performativity (see Chapter 2) to "undo normative categories that place rigid structures on how people live out their lives" (A. Y. Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 72). Using Butler's focus on performativity provides an analytical method that deconstructs "[t]he practice by which gendering occurs, the embodying of norms, is a compulsory practice, a forcible production" (Butler, 1997, p. 17).

Chapter 6

Regulation of the child's gendered sexual subjectivities

This chapter focusses on the Derridean idea of a re-demarcation of discourse (Derrida, 1972/1988) to show how notions of heteronormativity and the deployment of developmental discourses around age and innocence are deployed in participants' talk. It also shines a spotlight on the effect of performative utterances which construct norms about gender as contained in 'appropriate' words and actions. In this chapter the idea of a re-demarcation of language works on the premise of a dividing practice in language which, in these participants' talk, serves to objectify children as inside or outside subjects of normal childhood, and as female or male. In particular, masculinity discourses take a prominent place in the substance of these dividing practices. Further, this practice draws on a history of repetitive and reiterative chains of truth claims about childhood as 'innocent' and sexuality as heteronormative for the power that forces these constitutions (see Foucault, 1972). Here I use Butler's ideas to show how participants' language of sexuality continues the genealogy of citational chains outlined in the history of sexuality featured in Chapter 3 (see also Butler, 1990; B. Davies, 2014) and that continue to reproduce certain normative identities that relate to childhood in the twenty-first century. Ideas that come from notions of discursive subjectification and performative utterance (Butler, 1993) are also used to further shape this interrogation of participants' talk. Finally, I draw upon Derrida's (1972/1988) idea of a "speech act" as iterable/repetitive, to open a space

of possibility for the development of different types of conversations that could interrupt the particular histories of knowledge that adults draw on when they perceive/witness/comment on sexualised behaviour in childhood.

This chapter focusses on the talk of three participants, Sammie (a parent), Jayne (a teacher) and Val (a therapist) and their responses to three of the six vignettes, for the strategic discursive interplays related to the ideas about heteronormativity and developmental discourses related to age and gender. The examples that follow expose the workings of power/knowledge effects of gender and sexuality through utterances/speech acts that construct and sustain normative heterosexuality and hidden sexuality in childhood.

6.1 Parent view: Questions about the meaning of children's sexual and gender exploration

Age, and kissing as 'experimentation': Natural and (not) 'sexual'?

Sammie, a parent, described herself as “a fulltime mum” of three children, aged 4 to 9 years. She responded to the story of Deirdre kissing Frank, both aged eight (Vignette #2), as an idea of “experimenting” in her view of what might be happening in this situation of children kissing. The analysis that follows, of her ideas related to the perception of copying behaviour, connects with an underlying belief in age as determining whether a behaviour is sexual or not. This section of her talk, about behaviour and age, can be seen to then have implications in the next section for how her talk functions in constructions of gender. The following fragment of text shows the power effects of deployment of language on constructions of childhood and child sexuality as ‘play’, ‘experimentation’ and

‘mimicking’. The text continues then with Sammie exploring age in relation to childhood and ‘sexual feelings’. The text that follows begins when Sammie responded to her hearing the first part of the vignette when Deirdre had kissed Frank.

Sammie: They're children playing, experimenting. They must have seen that – whether it's in the home environment, their parents or siblings or whatever. They must have seen that, so they're mimicking what they're seeing.

Researcher: Mimicking – you said, 'experimenting,' what might they be experimenting about?

Sammie: By the time ... I'm just thinking if they're eight, would they have those feelings? [Pauses]... You know, if they like someone, then maybe that's a natural thing for them to want to kiss them. I don't know [if] by eight it would be a sexual, sexual feelings. I wouldn't have thought – I mean I don't know, I don't know if that would be considered to be sexual at eight. From my experience, I wouldn't have thought it was. If it was an older – you know, if they're the same age then yeah, but if it was older ones, then I would be worried. You know, one older.

Researcher: How old?

Sammie: Oh, you know, if [it] was senior students then maybe ten, eight, nine – ten. With an 8-year-old, then I'd be thinking, 'Hang on.'

Researcher: That would cause some questions.

Sammie: Yeah, definitely, definitely.

Sammie used the terms ‘playing’ and ‘experimenting’ as if they are interchangeable. She then expanded on the idea of play, perhaps drawing from the concept of parallel play, where something seen as the actions of groups of older people are copied in the spirit of ‘let’s pretend’. Sammie further talked of mimicking, and the idea of this action as an example of ‘copycat’ behaviour’ is further reinforced. Mimicking by children was seen by Sammie as natural. Other participants had drawn on ideas of children playing, through copying and “mimicking” in their responses. Children reproduce what they see adults do and learn to kiss as a way to express affection, as ‘liking someone’. However, Sammie’s use of “experimenting” in this fragment of talk opens up possibilities for thinking about whether the presence of other forms of social construction of childhood sexuality are also involved in this action. ‘Experimenting’ is a word that evokes a sense of children’s observational abilities and subsequent curiosity that may lead to something more purposeful than simply copying.

Brought back to the idea of experimenting, Sammie went to the idea of timing related to sexuality and kissing, and began to connect this with the age of the children concerned. She repeats the age “eight” three times and the word “older” three times, and after saying, “I’m just thinking”, said “I wouldn’t have thought” twice then repeated, “I don’t know, I don’t know”, at which point it can be seen that, at once claiming a knowledge of these matters, at the same time Sammie is unknowing or hesitant about what it is that she feels she does know. Sammie’s “maybe that’s a natural thing”, produces a reiteration of certain ideas about developmentalism and normativity in childhood. The idea of ‘natural’ is pivotal at this point. What is judged as ‘natural’ can assume a set of particular ideas about nature that link to the biological basis of behaviour, such as instinct or

drive, or in Butler's terms, "the biology-is-destiny formulation" (1999, p. 9).

Further, the idea of nature can hold a heteronormative assumption that it is natural for girls and boys to kiss. Thus, it is natural to kiss, particularly if "those (sexual) feelings" are present. These "feelings" are significant. This link cuts through her idea of 'natural' as non-sexual mimicking.

However, in the text above, through reiterating and repeating the age through which childhood sexuality is constituted ('How old?') the notion of affection between genders contrasts with "experimentation" which may include a sense of 'heteronormative knowing' not seen in mimicking. By asking, "How old?" I was que(e)rying (Taylor & Richardson, 2005) at what age is *the* developmental norm to assess childhood and deconstructing possible positions for 8-year-old children's kissing as 'permissible mimicking' or kissing as 'transgressive experimentation'. The response I received suggests some certainty in the performatives of language about age as a citational tool in identifying this distinction for childhood kissing between permissible mimicking and potentially 'sexual' transgressive experimentation.

Here Sammie was thinking about when the notion of "sexual" might apply in this scenario of childhood kissing, or possibly whether (and at what age) the idea of "sexual feelings" could be said to be present. The jumbled range of ages reflected some uncertainty for Sammie, possibly about her knowledge of puberty and when an introduction to "sexual feelings" might occur. What can be said is that child development discourses about puberty and stages of development related to age, that could provide her with clarity about what is going on, does not produce the desired effect in this case. When would a kiss "be considered to be sexual"? Sammie found this line of thinking quite challenging.

In each of these possible meanings, notions of ‘nature’ position children as submitting to ‘naturally’ gendered predispositions. Finally, Sammie’s view seems to be that older children kissing would be worrying. Might this be due to their ‘natural’ development and closeness to puberty where hormones and instinct have to take their ‘natural’ course? These repetitions of possible ages are reiterations of lines of thought for Sammie focussing on age and knowledge. By altering the sign (Derrida, 1978) of *age* from “eight” to “older”, Sammie disturbs the certainty of her knowledge. This deconstruction of age within her talking allows for a ‘breaking open’ to take place related to age and constructions of childhood sexuality. Sammie, however was not able to identify exactly who, and at what age, the “older ones” were. It seems that she considered that the ages of Deirdre and Frank were in the range of ages she found worrying.

In the literature (see Chapter 4), children kissing on the lips is positioned as binary, both an acceptable and not acceptable behaviour for children. This polarity has been viewed socially as acceptable and normative, such as Sammie’s understanding of play or copying behaviour. Children kissing is acceptable when it reproduces performatives of heteronormativity where boys and girls engage in ‘cute’, normatively gendered behaviour. Adult responses to children’s kissing are identified as part of “the process of heterosexualisation” by Robinson (2013, p. 96) within which children and their “desires are constituted within gender norms” (p. 96). However, kissing is also positioned as not acceptable. The possibility of Sammie’s view of kissing as experimental might introduce a sexualised meaning which transgresses the accepted moral and social norm.

For children aged nine or ten, according to Sammie, kissing is more likely to be purposely sexual. Sammie’s performative utterance of the ‘age’ citational

chain is displayed and confirmed through repetition of words that are “identifiable as conforming” and “identifiable as ‘citation’” (Butler, 1993, p, 172). Butler reflects that, “the force of history conditions contemporary usage” (1993, p. 172) of performatives. That is, the use of citational chains construct childhood as an age of (sexual) innocence/ignorance so that age classifies an act of kissing between two 8-year-old children as not sexual. In this context, discourses around innocence and ignorance reconstitute childhood within reiterations of the descriptions of age, play, experimenting and mimicking related to age. However, when kissing takes up sexual meaning, such as “those feelings...sexual feelings”, then understandings of play and experimentation appear lost or redefined. The potential for a child’s exploratory learning becomes a potential cause for worry.

Age continued to be an issue for Sammie later in the interview, to determine normative ideas of sexuality in childhood. The next section uses Derrida’s concept of deconstruction to expand meanings of potential hierarchical and binary spaces, to *break up* and *open other places* (see Caupito, 1997) that are not available within the hierarchies and binaries of age and developmental discourses.

Having those sexual feelings: A case of ‘earlier-onset’ puberty

This section connects with the previous one about ideas of experimentation and develops the analysis of constructions of sexuality/gender in the lives of young people at puberty. Puberty becomes the site of a binary in child development discourses in which children become knowledgeable about ‘sexual feelings’ in relation to those who are ignorant. Yet puberty is also related to age.

Sammie reflected again on sex/sexuality as experimentation in a response to a later vignette, where Quentin, while in the toilet, touches another boy's penis (Vignette #5). My inquiry at the beginning of this textual fragment follows Sammie's focus on talk about teachers' questioning in the vignette of Quentin's actions.

Researcher: Any other thoughts about what might be happening between the two boys?

Sammie: [Pauses] Again it's that whole experimentation thing, isn't it?

Researcher: It could be, eh?

Sammie: Yeah, 'cause if they're going into puberty [pause] If they're starting – and kids are starting much younger now aren't they – than they were, then [pause]

Researcher: Where do you, how do you know that?

Sammie: Just from the – from my experience when people started having those, well, when we had the talk about sexual feelings and then what was being taught in school. And it's much earlier now from teachers, from other parents.

Researcher: Okay.

Sammie: Friends have got teenage kids who have been through that stage with them, who have explained that it happens a lot earlier. Kids are maturing a lot earlier. You see that in the paper – yeah.

There is an assumption in Sammie's suggestion that children will explore and experiment and that this is to be accepted and expected. She is now not using the language of copying or mimicking. "That whole experimental thing" is a speech act that opens space for some purposeful meaning of what the two boys in the

vignette might be doing. It speaks both to the possibility of the boys' curiosity in sex while at the same time permitting the hidden aspect of experimenting. In this case, deconstruction of "it's that whole experimental thing" could offer ideas of permissibility for same-sex sexual encounters within a heteronormative context, but perhaps only at a particular age, and possibly considered more for boys (This idea comes forward in Chapter 8 when Maxine (a therapist) tells about a father's acceptance of his two sons' exploration and curiosity through sexual activity (including anal intercourse), and his telling of his own similar 'normal, exploratory' and curious experiences as a boy with other boys). Yet here too, Sammie remains uncertain. What is contained in the "isn't it?" phrase is unclear. Was she asking me for permission to think this way? Was she checking out my opinion as a male? Finding clarity includes Sammie deploying well-rehearsed developmental ideas related to the age of (bodily) development. Here, puberty matters.

Sammie appears to be stating what she knows about puberty ('starting much younger now', 'Kids are maturing a lot earlier'). It is within these hierarchical and binary spaces of child/adult, of pubescent child/pre-pubescent child, of ignorance/knowledge, of innocence/experience, and of latency/puberty, that Sammie's talk is located. She commented that talk with children about "sexual feelings" occurs earlier because puberty is earlier, "the talk" (with whom? Teachers? Parents?) is earlier, and kids are maturing (sexually?) earlier. Sammie backed up this assertion with reference to parents of older children that she knows ('friends have got teenage kids') and to popular media ('in the paper'). It seems that the timing of the natural order is being disturbed, and that sex and sexuality

information and knowledge now occurs at a younger age than was previously normative.

Sammie's use of that citational chain, "we had the talk", is another example of sexuality discourse in which sexual information is supposedly passed on. While Sammie described a "talk about sexual feelings and then what was being taught in school", a possible meaning of this phrase could assume that clear and full information about sexual development and reproduction is provided to a young person entering puberty. Yet, the language of having "the talk" is unclear, leaving questions about what is included and who "the talk" is between. Not said in this text is what "the talk" might include for boys, given the vignette focussed on the experience of two boys. Might there be any significant difference in "the talk" for girls compared with what is included for boys? Other participants explore ideas of "the talk" (see Chapters 7 and 8), and these include euphemistic and opaque descriptions of sex and sexuality. Might Sammie's ideas of "the talk" be similar? Robinson (2013) described "the talk" as a way for parents to think that they had complied with being responsible parents, and 'had done their bit'. Children who explore and experiment are constructed hierarchically within this talk as having greater responsibility than 'less-responsible' innocent/ignorant children about 'sexual feelings'. Ideas about exploration and experimentation (that include children's actions of kissing and touching another's genitals) become gendered, even if this is not clearly spoken of in the text.

In the next section, I examine a fragment of text that presents ideas about same-sex kissing, behaviour outside the binary of the heterosexual norm (Butler, 1999). Jayne, a teacher, talked in her interview about how key understandings of gender relations have changed within the school over recent years, especially for

younger children. Gender and sex are produced within Jayne's talk in the next section. From talk about age and puberty, I now explore an idea of Jayne's that, over time, children's awareness of (sexed/gendered) bodies occurs at an earlier age.

6.2 Teacher view: The child and their body

“Children are becoming more aware of their [gendered] bodies a lot earlier”

As Jayne talked and conversation progressed throughout the interview, what was noticeable later was that boys and their actions took prominence here in the speaking of examples, as they did in many of the participants discussions. This can be seen over the four sections of Jayne's talk. When speaking in this first section, about Year Two students, those aged six or seven years old, Jayne commented that she had noticed a shift in children's awareness of their bodies in relation to others. For Jayne, this awareness seemed to have happened at an earlier age than before.

Jayne: Year Two children, I've taught in the junior school for years, and [at] swimming time all the children have gotten changed in the same room, quick as they can, girls on one side, boys on the other, never a big deal. Yet here, the girls get changed in my office or in the class room next door and the boys get changed here and the children make a lot more fuss over 'Ohhh, I saw his bum!' or 'Oh, he's looking at me through the window!' those sorts of things. Whereas even a few years ago that wouldn't have been an issue. So

maybe children are becoming more aware of their bodies a lot earlier.

Researcher: What do you think might contribute to that earlier awareness?

Jayne: I think I guess it's the media and access to the internet and things that maybe we didn't used to have so much.

Researcher: Have you heard children talk about those things that...?

Jayne: I've definitely got children, I've had children in the past but also now, who have spoken about...using words like penis and things like that whereas...I think maybe even parents are trying to be more PC too, than we used to be. I'm not sure why. I guess it's the media, younger models, there is all those different body images, which are much more prevalent in our society than when I was younger...than they used to be.

Researcher: So the idea of parents being a bit more PC...?

Jayne: I'm not sure if that is happening or not.

Researcher: First of all, what do you mean by that?

Jayne: I mean we would...I remember with my oldest daughter who's 22, we used to say things like...probably 'your bottom'. Whereas my sister's daughter, who is a lot younger, my sister made a very strong point that they used a lot of anatomically correct names. 'We're not going to call it a willy or anything like that, it's a penis, and that's all there is to it'. So I wonder if more parents are like that. I guess some younger parents, and things like on Facebook, and they're doing a lot more social networking and maybe have a

lot more access to apps and sites and things than I used to when I was a young mother.

Jayne described a variation that she had noticed over time when children change clothing to go swimming. Whereas previously, children changed in the same space, now children used two spaces, one for girls and one for boys. She commented that this was because children were “becoming more aware of their bodies”, possibly referring to children’s attentiveness to genital differences between girls and boys. The language appears to be the talk of girls since masculine pronouns are used within the examples. Jayne’s talk used non-specific language, such as “I saw his bum” and “he’s looking at me through the window”. Might this possibly refer to a boy purposely ‘mooning’, showing his (naked) ‘bum’, or a girl taking a furtive peek in the space where the boys changed? Might the boy’s looking through the window be seen as playful behaviour or possibly an action in which boys are positioned in heteronormative gender discourses that make available an expectation for boys to try and observe girls when naked or dressing?

Jayne’s comment, about a difference over time for children’s awareness of their physical bodies as differently sexed, was an example of a sustained developmental discourse involving biological determinism. This understanding differed from Sammie’s context of children’s learning about difference through experimentation. Jayne’s example introduces the physiological boundary of sex/gender in the lives of these children. Blaise (2005, 2009) considers that the materiality of sex is forcibly produced, and that may have occurred in this example of the boundary of gender. According to Butler’s (1992) theory of the heterosexual matrix, this ‘natural binary’ of girls and boys reiterates a

heterosexual normativity, even for Year Two children. The constitution of ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ compulsory sexuality, as heteronormatively gendered, is produced in this example by the children in their talk.

In this text, Jayne explored a shift in language and how body parts are named and spoken about. She then made a link between this PC practice and the possibility of parents using social networking sites. Did this refer to the possibility that children now have access to specialist language at a younger age without adults involved? Or an access through ‘PC’ parents? Thinking that “even a few years ago that wouldn’t have been an issue”, Jayne noted changes in developmental and social understandings “than when I was younger”. Common parlance suggests that “PC” (political correctness) is used in a pejorative sense, as a term to be critical of something, frequently suggesting that the way of speaking is closing down other ways of speaking. When Jayne said, “even parents are trying to be more PC too, than we used to be”, it seemed that she was questioning the use of names of body parts, such as ‘penis’, and parents teaching children the names of their genitals at an early age.

For Jayne, it appeared that using “anatomically correct names” for (male) genitals, rather than generic names (e.g., such as ‘your bottom’) as she then proceeded to explain, was part of this educational and social shift in earlier body awareness for children. Jayne focused on male genitals, naming one part of the male genitalia, penis, and not ‘willy’. There is an absence of naming female genitalia. Is this possibly an action of performative language that reiterates male bodies as being spoken about, having the effect of silencing or subjugating female bodies? What discourses could be at work? My being a male researcher may have had some influence on the responses given. Could the power effect of ‘politically

correct' language about parenting, position a response to a prominence of male actions that parents feel obligated to name body parts to inform and protect their daughters? Ideas of what is permitted socially to speak, of political correctness, and of what is difficult to speak and may therefore be left unsaid, are now taken up in the next section.

Jayne's use of the word penis, however, does direct a focus on male sexuality. By naming the male genital body part, I wonder if this indicated either a presupposition that talk about male genitals is more available than talk about female genitals, or that masculinity dominates sexuality talk. This talk has power effects in gender discourse. Butler (1999) encourages thinking through notions of gender to question and challenge those that "support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power" (p. 44). Jayne's focus on male genitals could suggest that it is easier to speak of the visible and external than the hidden and internal female genitals, but in doing so, a masculine hegemony is reiterated (see Butler, 1990; Derrida, 1972/1988).

Questions about kissing, about age, masculinity and puberty, all contribute to a complexity of constituting childhood and sexuality in childhood. The next section explores a discourse about age that assumes a shift for children into adulthood, in particular, the idea that that age predicates a gendered transitioning. Queer theory (following Butler, 1997) is applied for its deconstructive focus (see Taylor & Richardson, 2005) to 'disrupt' notions that "gender and sexuality are inherently fixed in one's biological sexed body" (Robinson, 2005b, p. 25).

“She’s a girl, she just wants to be a boy”: A child questions their gender

In this section of transcript, Jayne was coming to the end of the interview and reflected back on the vignette about the Deirdre and Frank kissing (Vignette #2). She was questioning for herself about same-sex kissing, and extended her thinking outside of dominant heteronormativity.

Jayne It’s [i.e. the interview] been a very interesting process because it’s made me think about my own reactions to things and normally [pause] I think even the same-sex kissing, I had a little bit of an ‘ooo, what if I saw two boys kissing?’ and while I can speak the jargon and two of my best friends are lesbians and we’re happy with that because they love each other and etc., etc. But I guess on a more personal level it did make me think ‘oh, how comfortable am I with this?’

Jayne’s response was different from other participants, in that she initiated talking about possibilities for sexual practices between couples of the same gender and thereby ‘subverting’ and ‘destabilising’ the stability “of the heterosexual presumption” (Butler, 1997, p. 24). Jayne reflected further on her responses to the idea of two children of the same sex/gender kissing. Using her experience with lesbian friends as a way to think through her reaction, she acknowledged some discomfort with the idea of two boys kissing. Jayne said that she can “speak the jargon” about homosexual friends, but this suggests the possibility of discomfort with the overall notion of same gender rather than hetero-gender relationships. An unexplored question about age and gender with such relationships is hidden in her response: Is it because these boys are children, or because they are male? The

presumption of biological discourse is that sex is binary, female and male, and inherent in this is that sex consequently determines gender as heterosexual.

The fragment of text from Jayne's interview presents some troubling of discourse within this consideration of same-sex relationships. For her, homosexuality, gay and lesbian sexuality, disturbs the "compulsory order of sex/gender/desire" (Butler, 1999, p. 9). Jayne's discomfort tells something of how performatives of dominant heteronormativity position her within discourses of gender and sexuality. Thinking about her "reactions to things and normally", Jayne does think, "How comfortable am I with this?" This issue seemed important to her, but there was tension between the public jargon and Jayne's personal and private feelings. The disturbance for Jayne was a disturbance of the heterosexual matrix in which the binary of male/female is produced as natural and normal. The switching of gender within pairing (as in two boys or two women) provides an insight into performatives of gender and sexuality that are, as B. Davies (1993) states, "So fundamental to our talk [and] something we have learned to see as natural" (p. 7). Furthermore, this disturbance related not only to Jayne's (dis)comfort with gender and sexual relationships, but was here responding to the possibility of children of the same sex/gender kissing.

Jayne then proceeded to tell a story about a child at school who appears to be a boy, but she is then informed that the child is a girl. I have included a lengthy section of text to let Jayne's narrative tell the story:

Jayne: ...and there is a little girl who I've...had lots and lots of dealings with but I thought she was a boy because she said she was a boy and she certainly looks very, very boyish and when she told me her name, it's a very girly name but she said 'I

don't care that I've got that name even though I'm a boy, it doesn't worry me that I'm called that. That's what my mother wanted to call me and so she did.' And I accepted that on totally face value 'oh well, you've got a good attitude, good boy' sort of thing. I probably said good boy to her and it wasn't until quite recently and I said to another teacher 'that's terrible that the mother called her son that name' and the other teacher's like 'she's a girl. She just wants to be a boy.' And I said 'are we talking about the same kid?' 'Yeah, yeah. She's a girl' and I said 'I asked her if she was a girl and she told me she was a boy' and then the next time I saw her I almost felt like saying something like 'why did you tell me you were a boy when you're a girl?' or 'you should be proud to be a girl' or 'happy that you're a girl' or something like that. I didn't of course because I thought if that's a stage she's going through, why should a teacher make her feel unhappy or self-conscious. But my reaction was 'oh, of course she's a girl.' She should be honest and say yes I'm a girl rather than...you know.

Researcher: ... if this girl is thinking strongly that she identifies with boys and wants to be a boy, what that might mean or suggest in terms of understanding people who might not fit for themselves in the gender that they've been...

Jayne: Yes, that they've been biologically assigned and I did think that because I thought well...she does, she only plays with the boys and they're naughty boys and so they get into trouble.

Jayne's words heighten and confirm the heteronormative discursive thread that is reiterated in her telling; that biology determines sex, and sex determines gender. Jayne's experience with this boy-girl-boy child challenges her sensibility as an adult, and as a woman, as she experiences some discomfort in the disturbance of the natural-normal binary of sex and gender. This child's story, and Jayne's experience as a teacher where this child is a student, produces new possibilities for the performatives of gender and sex, and of childhood as agentic and queer, and of "gender as a constituted social temporality" (Butler, 1999, p. 179). Jayne explicitly linked her remarks to a biological discourse ("that they've been biologically assigned") and signalled the child's connection and play with boys who are "naughty boys...they get into trouble". It is as if being one of the boys determines naughtiness and trouble, as gendered effects. Jayne's ideas of gender appear to be located within the citational chains of biological sex, and that genitals determine gender ('she is a boy in the wrong body'). While Jayne had "never come across that before" she utilised the interview, and her thinking in response to the vignettes, to reflect on this experience she has had as a teacher. In this brief moment of the interview, Jayne's exploration of her experience with the boy-girl-boy child subverted the notion of a 'biologically-determined' and 'natural' sex and that being feminine is not a choice "but the forcible citation of a norm (Butler, 1997, p. 18). Clearly, this notion was destabilised.

Butler's notion of the heterosexual matrix is reproduced in the gender performatives repeated in the language Jayne uses ('she certainly looks very, very boyish', 'it's a very girly name') and in her expectations of how a girl should look, speak and acknowledge her name.

Butler questions the cultural interpretation and constructions of gender and sex, as if “certain laws generate gender differences along universal axes of sexual difference” (1999, p. 11). Rather, Butler extends Foucault’s ideas of governmentality, understanding people as subjected within regimes that classify within binary systems of male/female and hetero/homosexual. Social systems and language of these binaries act on people to regulate and normalise them as subjects. The effects of subjectification can be seen in Jayne’s talk about ‘boyish’ looks and a ‘girly’ name, and yet the regulatory practice of normative gender was here being queried/queered (see Taylor & Richardson, 2005). Butler questions that,

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow... The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body...the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (Butler, 1999, p. 179)

Jayne’s experience calls into light how children are constructed in public settings, such as at school. Children’s subjectivities are shaped in multiple settings, with school and home recognised as significant, as they are within this study. H. Davies and Christensen (2015) refer to studies of family and childhood that “have troubled the distinction between the private sphere (family and home) and the public sphere (the street, community and state)” (p. 32), and here the school can be included in the public sphere. In their geographical work, Davies and Christensen reflect on ideas of intimacy, including ‘embodied intimacy’ and ‘intimate knowledge’, as concepts to use in analysing how children negotiate intimate relationships and privacy. While questioning what might be considered

private and what might be considered public, and what this might mean for regulation of children and practices of sex/sexuality, Jayne's talk in the next section becomes the focus of further analysis on gender, including family practices.

Sexual curiosity: Looking at bodies

This section includes a deconstruction of notions of what might be considered 'normal' or socially acceptable in families, related to intimacy and nudity, and how these link to gender. Butler's concept of gender performativity supports a Foucauldian critique of normativity in this section.

Jayne responded to the vignette about nine-year-old Quentin touching another boy's penis (Vignette #5). This was a further story about children's (boys') awareness of bodies. Jayne's thinking about this vignette reflected discourses about development; about age, and about social and cultural appropriateness. She reflected that young children's curiosity about others' bodies is acceptable, but not when it came to a nine-year-old boy.

Jayne: At nine, obviously, that's getting reasonably old for getting curious about somebody else's body, I would think. Socially [pause] it is socially unacceptable, I think even men don't look at each other in the urinals.

Researcher: Can I come back to the idea that it's a bit old for that sort of curiosity. What sort of age do you think that might end?

Jayne: I would have thought [pause] I know with my own children when they were pre-schoolers, and I suppose the first year or so of their schooling. I don't know. I've got two daughters and three sons

[pause] But my three boys, who are in the middle, and I know every time I'd go and get into the bath myself, my oldest son 'oh yay you're getting into the bath' and all the boys would hop in with me and that happened until Bob was about 9 and then no more. So his brothers were 4 and 5 at the time and once Bob said 'no, we don't get into the bath with Mum anymore'. Then his younger brothers, absolutely not, no way. And it was very much my middle boy, if I went in and he was getting changed, it would be like 'MUUUM' sort of thing, even though he was about 5 or 6 by that stage. So I don't know if it was the example of their older brother, modesty now, we don't go in when Mum's getting dressed or anything like that. Whereas I sort of assumed that the younger boys would carry on thinking it was alright to have a shower with Mum or a bath with Mum until they were about 8 or 9.

I was curious about Jayne's view that sexual or genital curiosity might end within childhood. Might curiosity by some people about other people's bodies continue, regardless of age, particularly during adolescence? Jayne then reflected on the times when her children bathed with her, and a time when that stopped. Jayne's reflection as a mother bathing with her boys until her eldest son, aged about nine, shaped her thinking about the boy, Quentin's actions (also aged nine) in the vignette. According to Jayne, children, boys in particular, should have learned practices of modesty by age nine. It is not clear whether this thinking connects to her previous ideas, related to children changing clothes for swimming, about the shifts in the children's awareness of other children's bodies. Nor is it clear

whether this form of ‘modesty’ extended to how the boys might view one another, or how they perceived being viewed by their brothers.

Jayne’s middle son was now also not wanting to be seen naked by his mother, suggesting that he had new awareness of his body in relation to his mother. There is an irony here. Having children bathe with their mother can reflect the notion of child innocence, yet a sense of modesty and new awareness could be regarded as both a loss of innocence and having new knowledge. There is a new or different knowing in modesty that was not present previously. How might have Jayne’s sons come to the knowledge/power that they and their brothers should no longer “get into the bath with Mum anymore” or “go in when Mum’s getting dressed or anything like that”?

Jayne’s story of bathing with her sons provides a discursive context in which to examine public and private space for acceptable or appropriate actions for children and sexuality. In her bathroom, these notions of private and public collide, as bathing with three sons transitioned from acceptable to not acceptable when her nine-year-old son decided to no longer bathe with her. The public nature of sharing an intimate family bath collectively then became a private and individualised matter. In H. Davies and Christensen’s (2015) thinking, the family’s ‘embodied intimacy’, comprising “interphysical interactions involving touch and the closer proximity of bodies” (p. 31), which was experienced in this example through bathing together, is no longer available in this form. Jayne’s middle son also claimed privacy through individual modesty when changing, “even though he was about 5 or 6”. Age is given importance in this telling, as Jayne reflects upon the timing of her sons’ movement around a shared bathing experience to individual privacy. Gender is not spoken in her telling, yet is a

likely discourse for analysing what happened. What are the social norms for bathing between genders? What are the social norms for boys regarding bathing with parents?

This story of bathing is an example of (un)doing gender (see Butler 1990, 1999). It seems that gender was undone or not being done (to use Butler's concept) within the action of mother and sons bathing together, prior to Bob's new knowledge that closed this possibility for 'embodied intimacy'. Gender was then 'done' when "Bob said 'no, we don't get into the bath with Mum anymore'." Gender became performative within the son-mother relational context *and* also within the brother-brothers relational context. Bob, and each family member, was discursively positioned within the "regulatory regime of gender differences [which] operate in the ritualized repetition of norms" (Butler, 1997, p. 16). In these performatives of gender, practices of masculinity and heteronormativity are repeated, and Jayne and her sons are constituted as gendered.

Performatives of gender occur through various sources of 'guidance' that try to inform parents about their children's privacy as embodied and emotional (see H. Davies & Christensen, 2015). The advice repeatedly offered comprise citational chains through which a forcible production of gender norms constitute parents as safe and appropriate, or not. At one end of the spectrum is Spock's (1954) advice that "a mother's nudity may be too exciting for her small son" (p. 189). In contrast, Tate's (2017) newspaper column on mothers bathing with sons ('Why is it not normal?': Mum defends bath with sons) supported British singer and TV presenter, Stacey Solomon's 'Instagram' story about sharing a bath with her two sons on Mother's Day. Tate reacted to judgmental comments and included Solomon's question, "why the human body always has to be sexualised".

One reader, 'Truth Hertz' wrote, "Imagine if it was a Dad with daughters of the same age, wonder if the comments would be so friendly?" Social discourses on parent-child bathing include ideas of child innocence and parental responsibility for teaching modesty and morality, all of which are gendered. Jayne might be positioned alongside Stacey Solomon within these discourses, yet the voices of Foucault's "judges of normality" (1975/1977, p. 304) are everywhere. Within the public space of media, judgments of bathing and nudity between parents and children are vocal around attributions of different meanings, including negative designations of 'sexualisation' and sexual abuse.

Gabb's (2013) British study of intimacy between fathers and children, and images of nude children, offers additional reiterative normative ideas about gendered childhood innocence. Gabb remarks that, "Unclothed children playing in the privacy of the family garden or enjoying bathtime with a parent remain identified by parents as the epitome of childhood, that is to say precious innocence" (p. 651). Gabb identifies cultural ambiguities surrounding the ages and determinants of when nudity is no longer permissible, noting that

It remains adults who decide what is right and what is wrong, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in families. Prohibitions and permission-giving ultimately reside with parents...cultural understandings of age, nudity and sexuality inform the imposition of age restrictions that separate adults and children, in public spaces such as toilets and changing rooms, and in households through norms associated with age appropriate codes of conduct. (2013, p. 643)

Gabb reports on social constructionist ideas that produce notions of acceptable or unacceptable nudity and bathing in families. Jayne identified her son as the one

who decided at what age he no longer bathed with her, but the production of ‘modesty’ is constructed within social and cultural discourses. Jayne’s son learnt this ‘modesty’ through particular performatives that embody norms of gender related to age and sex

In the final section of Jayne’s talk in this chapter, a number of concepts that have been explored come together, namely experimentation, gender and masculinity, opening a further space for genealogical analysis of gender within family practices.

“What we did in our family”: A genealogy of gender

This section continues with applying Foucault’s analysis of discourse, Derrida’s deconstruction, and Butler’s critique of gender performatives.

Jayne responded further to the vignette (#2) about Deirdre kissing Frank. She questioned with some doubt what could be viewed as inappropriate about the two children kissing, commenting that “children do experiment”. The language of ‘experiment’ is reiterated from Sammie’s talk at the beginning of this chapter. Jayne proceeded to reflect on her own family experience, and then wondered what effect there might be if the two children kissing were of the same sex:

Jayne: Children do kiss each other. My youngest son is 13, he still kisses me, [and] long may it last. I would be horrified if someone said ‘oh your son still kisses you, that’s inappropriate now at his age’ sort of thing. And children do experiment with what they see, particularly if their parents are loving together - and it just depends on your own family practices. We kiss a lot in our family, bedtime, everyone gets kissed ‘goodnight’, those sorts of things.

Jayne reflects on the vignette's example of two children kissing and offers ideas of experimentation and cultural family practices as ways to understand the action in the vignette. Her telling about kissing is constructed as 'normal' within her family's practices, and particularly where "parents are loving together". Kissing is a familiar action and, in Jayne's view, is not experienced as inappropriate for any member of the family.

In Jayne's example, kissing with her son is an embodied intimacy (H. Davies & Christensen, 2015) which includes "practices of care and tactile everyday actions" (p. 31). Kissing, in this setting, is performative in constructing and reconstructing both the relationship of embodied intimacy between Jayne and her son, as well as constituting "family practices". By repeating the action of kissing, Jayne and her son and others in the family ('everyone gets kissed "goodnight"') reiterate the construction of 'family'. For her, any interpretation of the child's action of kissing in the vignette as inappropriate does not make sense. Kissing, for Jayne, is a family practice, a practice that is an embodied intimacy.

Gender is silent in this fragment of text, but not absent. As a mother, Jayne speaks about family practices, and the example she recounts is with her teenage son. Jayne's example may have been to simply describe kissing as unproblematic, but the language used produces an effect of power on gendered relationships in the family. By saying that "children do experiment with what they see, particularly if their parents are loving together", Jayne describes performatives that iterate and reiterate gender. What is known from Jayne's story is that (heterosexual) parents kiss, and opposite-sex parent and child kiss. Kissing is produced as a gendered family practice; kissing is a reiterative practice of gender.

Jayne then explored her thinking about two girls kissing, or two boys:

- Jayne: And if those two children have a close relationship, which they obviously do because they're playing both in and out of the classroom, I would also think would there be such a big deal if it was her kissing another girl? Or if it was two boys kissing? Does that make it better or worse?
- Researcher: Do you want to say a bit more about the same gender kissing?
- Jayne: I think little girls do kiss each other, I've certainly seen it and it's a mark of affection. I've also had lots of children, again in this classroom but over the years, who kiss each other and I think it's your own perceptions too. You think 'Eeew, two boys shouldn't be kissing' but I think that's the NZ kiwi male culture too. You encourage the boys to be tough and strong and boys don't cry, my brother was never allowed to cry, those sorts of things 'boys don't cry'. I think whoever was getting upset about it or concerned about it would need to think 'now why is this making me unhappy? Why is this making me feel uncomfortable?' Because again, they're eight years old, they're just children.
- Researcher: You mentioned about the kiwi male sort of idea, is that changing or is it...I'm just wondering in terms of your understanding of what that might mean?
- Jayne: I think it's shifting a little bit I do think but there are still some dads who are very, very old school. I'm not sure, here, with maybe the socio-economic factors, that it's a lower decile school and therefore we've got more worker sort of dads, blue collar workers.

I've certainly...parent teacher interviews and I've had fathers 'I know my son!' you know, those sorts of things.

Jayne first reflected on children kissing as relational, much as Sammie did earlier. In asking (herself?) whether the kissing might be between two girls or two boys, her question was, "Does that make it better or worse?" This is a curious question, immediately focussing on the possibility of morality around children's kissing, described as 'better' or 'worse'. It is unclear what this could mean, but possibly may have been the use of a phrase to suggest that, in her view, there is no morality related to young children kissing. After I asked her to say more about the same gender kissing, Jayne then brought forward a curious noticing on gender: that, in New Zealand society, it seems acceptable for girls to kiss each other, but not boys, even though they are children. For some reason, that does not seem acceptable here. A permission, within gender discourses, constructs a level of intimacy that is afforded to girls, but not to boys – especially within "NZ kiwi male culture". In this culture, boys are not allowed to cry, they are "encouraged to tough and strong".

Jayne then questioned what might contribute to a person suspecting the action of the children in the vignette. Her rationale that "they're just children", and that children may have family cultural practices around kissing, positions these children safely within her thinking regardless if there was the possibility of the two children experimenting. I was interested in her comment about the kiwi male and so asked more about this. Ideas of "old school" and "lower decile", with working class fathers who are "blue collar workers", brings forward Jayne's scrutiny that the "kiwi male" masculinity is connected to class and income. The assumption made, it seems by Jayne, is a discourse on masculinity as the

normative heterosexual, is macho and is less tolerant, or intolerant, of other forms of masculinity. “I know my son,” sounds to be a statement that closes possibility for alternative masculinities, and might be declaring the father’s intent that his son will be like him, like a “kiwi male”.

Jayne identified a cultural notion of masculinity in New Zealand that “boys don’t cry” (see Chapter 3). Donnelly (1978) reflected on this in his book, *Big boys don’t cry*, identifying a macho heterosexually dominant masculinity presented as “kiwi male culture”. Some of the effects of this cultural notion have been a lack of tolerance to intimacy between males, and other forms of masculinity, as well as the ways women are positioned within a gendered discourse that is hierarchical and discriminatory. Intimacy between males may incite homophobic panic. In Chapter 3, Law, et al. (1999), Bannister (2007) and Pease (1997) were cited, respectively, for their reflections about ideas of ‘the Kiwi male’, the macho Kiwi male, and about macho masculinity that is less tolerant, or intolerant, of other forms of masculinity. Masculinity is constituted as essentialised (Connell, 2002), and bodies (in this case, children’s bodies) “become part of the language through which gender is written and read” (K.J. Burke, 2011, p. 23). She later returns to reflect on this issue of boys kissing boys.

A further assumption is how women, and girls, are therefore positioned within gender discourse when such a masculinity is taken up (see Connell, 1995, 2002). This likely refers to traditional binary positions for men and women, boys and girls. Masculinity is spoken and acted on boys from birth, and the transition from boyhood to manhood is assumed through many performative texts, spoken and acted. In the next section, a therapist’s talk of boys includes ideas about normative masculinity allowing boys to be “overtly sexual”.

6.3 Therapist view: “It’s more acceptable for boys to be overtly sexual”: (Re)Constructing gender binaries

In this section with Val, a therapist, I focus specifically on the performatives of gender within the interview when discussing children’s sexual behaviour. A number of participants spoke about the social acceptability of boys, but not girls, when acting overtly in showing or talking about their genitals. We were in the midst of Val’s response to the vignette (#4) about Jacqui rubbing herself between her legs, when she said:

Val: ...like the urinating thing [in Vignette #1], we kind of tolerate boys touching their genitals much more often than we do girls touching their genitals.

Researcher: Any ideas?

Val: We could all get gender politic about that. Couldn’t we?

Researcher: Again, if you want to pass, just say so.

Val: I don’t know, really. It’ll be a question that I give some thought to. Maybe because [a] boy’s [genitals] is on the outside, so we kind of expect that they’ll need to adjust it and fiddle with it, and play with it. I don’t know, we just seem to have different expectations of boys and girls. And maybe it is a biological or physiological thing, you know, ‘cause it’s kind of like the peeing thing [in Vignette #1].

Researcher: And, if we were to get to gender politic?

Val: That it’s there, it’s more acceptable for boys to, kind of be overtly sexual, than it is for girls.

Researcher: And that’s something that in our society you think is present?

Val: Yeah, I do.

Researcher: Do you think that sort of message sometimes has effects for the clients who are coming to see you here [in counselling]? in the sense that message of how society allows boys to be more overt in some ways, might have effects for how children, the adolescents and other males who come?

Val: I suppose – and this is probably more evident in [the work with] adolescents, and [in the work with] children too. I guess it means that we might be quite so quick to pick up on girls concerning sexual behaviour. And we might take a different meaning of that for quite a long time before it gets to a point where we identify it as concerning.

Val shifts in this first part of the fragment from a focus on the vignette (#4) about the girl, Jacqui, touching herself between her legs, to the vignette (#1) about a boy who urinates on the school playground. She made a clear political statement about socially and culturally accepted gendered positioning, “we kind of tolerate boys touching their genitals much more often than we do girls touching their genitals”. I tried to offer Val a space to speak into what this might mean for her, asking for any ideas. Her response, “We could all get gender politic about that. Couldn’t we?” surprised me, and I was unsure what to say, sensing a political positioning occurring within the interview between male researcher and female participant. I repeated an earlier invitation that she could pass on any question she did not wish to respond to. Val then reflected in response to the question, sharing her ideas about gender differences and tolerating boys’ genital touching.

Val located biology and physiology as a reason for boys' focus on and handling of their genitals. Their genitals are on the outside [of their body] "so we kind of expect that they'll need to adjust...fiddle...play with it". Interested in her other thoughts apart from biology/physiology, I returned to Val's earlier response and asked about the idea of getting 'gender politic'. Val responded directly ("that it's there"), that it is socially and culturally "acceptable for boys to...be overtly sexual, than it is for girls". She identifies that, not only are boys more likely to be "tolerated" touching their genitals than it is for girls, but she now comments on the social acceptability of boys' "overt" sexuality. I wanted to check this with her, that this is currently present in our society. I asked Val about her reference to society's acceptance of overt male sexuality that resonates with such discourse in the media, and what effects that might have with people consulting her in her professional practice as a therapist.

Val's reflection on gender produced an understanding for her about her work with children in therapy. Val held a sense that gender difference had effects for recognising whether particular sexual behaviour may be harmful or problematic. She reflected that girls' sexual behaviour may be viewed less problematically in terms of being harmful to others, compared with boys' sexual behaviour.

My position of offering Val the possibility to pass early in this fragment was an example of an awareness of gender and positioning as a researcher (see Flanagan, 2015). The position of offering a pass to a question calls on knowledge of how discourses at times position people to (not) talk. Not only might male gender act to position a female participant through this talk and in this way, but possibly other knowledges about me. Talk of overt male sexuality and touching of

genitals includes the possibility of including discussion about masturbation. For example, knowledge of me having been a priest could bring forth ideas for a participant about the history of the church saying that masturbation is a sin (see Chapter 3; Chapter 8, section on ‘self-soothing’). Religious discourses have strongly promoted ideas about sex for procreation, of dominant male and suppressed female gender positions in society, and of denial of the body (Francoeur, 1990). By not denying the body’s passions, masturbation is viewed as a sinful and harmful activity across history and across religious cultures (see Chapter 4; Francoeur, 1990), not only within Christianity (deMause, 1974; Foucault, 1978/1990, 2016; S. Jackson, 1990), but also Judaism (Dorff, 2003) and Islam (Tabatabaie, 2015a, 2015b). Among these ideas, besides labelling as sinful, are that masturbation is dangerous and harmful, or that it is selfish (see Chapter 4). Foucault (1978/1990) states that “practically all children indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity...at the same time ‘natural’ and ‘contrary to nature,’ this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers” (p. 104). Again, Foucault (2016) identifies a link between religious and medical concerns that “masturbation becomes the cause, the universal cause of every illness” (p. 241). Within sex discourse, “Sexuality enables everything that is otherwise inexplicable to be explained” (p. 241). There emerges in these religious and social discourses a discourse of the flesh and a discourse of sexual psychopathology (Foucault, 2016).

A discursive effect of these religious and social/cultural ideas includes genealogical performatives related to gender and practices about masturbation. Whether these ideas may have been present in Val’s thinking about getting “gender politic” is not known, but these chains nonetheless permeate within

current practices and language about masturbation. These textual chains are worth noting, as there were and are effects for children within families and schools. Various media report discursive gender assumptions about males. One social media site, for example, gave coverage of male sexuality which displays this assumption that men are more tactile with their genitals than females (Kuzma, 2015). The action is given social acceptability, supported with general references to a scientific base, yet promoted and reiterated within heteronormative gendered media.

Gender surfaced within this interview, in Val's responses, as a discursive site of power relations. In her talk, gender is constituted and reconstituted as a binary, through sexuality and sexual behaviour. Within performatives of words about boys and girls, and ideas of boys' and girls' behaviour, assumptions about males and females re-tell constructions of gender, and reconstruct gender in the telling as something natural (see B. Davies, 1993). As Davies noted, "The division of people into males and females is so fundamental to our talk ... that it is generally understood as a natural fact of the real world rather than something we have learned to see as natural" (1993, p. 7). By stating, "it's more acceptable for boys to, kind of be overtly sexual, than it is for girls" both reiterates performatives of masculinity as hegemonic, and challenges the heteronormative and hegemonic masculinity that is in contrast to feminist views of gender.

Chapter summary: Children should know about sex as heteronormatively gendered

Participants in this research drew upon a range of citational chains (see Butler, 1990; B. Davies, 2014) that are reiterated and reperformed (see Derrida, 1972/1988) in the statements participants made. These are connected with ideas of childhood ignorance and innocence (e.g., Bhana, 2016; Burman, 2008a, 2008b; Robinson, 2013). Citational chains related to discourses about ignorance-through-innocence about sex/sexuality in childhood can be seen in participant's talk. These include: that sex should be (heteronormatively) gendered; that sexuality is located within a male/female binary; that the 'true' nature of sex/sexuality is to be hidden from young people; and that knowledge about sex is concerned with past practices that valorise patriarchal or male-centred views. A number of participants, for example, Sammie talked about boys in ways that supported their gendered approval, whether spoken or acted. Val said, "we kind of tolerate boys touching their genitals much more often than we do girls touching their genitals" and Jayne's experience was of the girl-child who produced herself as a boy-child. According to Jayne, her sons constructed themselves as gendered males when deciding to no longer bathe with their mother. The language seems to oscillate between certainty and uncertainty. Here were three women speaking and yet when speaking gender and child sexuality, much of the talk was around masculinity or male sexuality.

In my analysis, I questioned taken-for-granted ideas about the meaning of sexual interest and exploration for children. Through deconstructing participant utterances, a questioning of the certainty that existed opened the possibility for

examining other possibilities in uncertainty. In these statements, children were positioned, according to participants' language, as producers of gender and sexuality. Participants are positioned, through their language, as sustaining heteronormative ideas for gender and sexuality, but this position is marked with some uncertainty. This chapter has exposed the ways that gender is constructed and reiterated in children's lives in both private and public spheres, and particularly how boys continue to shape gender as heteronormative in dominant ways through hegemonic masculinity.

Chapter 7

Regulation of the child's knowledge of sex as reproduction

In Chapters 7 and 8, I utilise Foucault's concepts of power/knowledge and relations of power, through governance and regulation, to analyse participants' talk within settings of family and school. I scrutinise the words and phrases participants use in order to illuminate power relations involved in key discursive practices that govern childhood sexuality through disciplinary techniques of secrecy and hidden knowledge. Using Foucault's words (in italics), such practices include *disciplinary techniques with regulative methods* (1978/1990, p. 146) that hide or silence knowledge/truth of sexuality from the child; *a policing of statements* (1978/1990, p. 18) so that what is said/done is deemed to be 'appropriate'; and *obscure speech* (1978/1990, p. 68) that confines sexuality as knowledge that is partially shared yet also partly hidden through *the slow surfacing of confidential statements* (1978/1990, p. 63). These disciplinary practices of governmentality both form an 'innocent' child and conceal sex knowledge from an 'innocent' childhood. These practices construct secrecy about reproductive sex/sexuality, and are shown to be constructed and reconstructed in participants' talk.

The analytic focus in this chapter is on specific talk from five individual participants (Sammie, Toni, and Patsy (parents) Sandra (therapist), and Jayne (teacher)) and also from six mothers in the parents' group (see Table 2, p. 176). This talk was generated in response to two of the six vignettes: the second

vignette where Deirdre kisses Frank (both aged eight years), and the sixth vignette where Stephen, aged seven, tells Lucy, aged six, about sexual intercourse (see Appendix A).

7.1 Producing childhood innocence through ignorance

The discursive production of innocent children is well documented in research and constructed within developmental and deterministic frameworks (see Chapter 4). Innocence, as socially and culturally normative for childhood, connects to notions that sexuality and sexual knowledge are dangerous to children. Parental and educational practices, therefore, work to sustain the child's ignorance of sexual reproductive knowledge. Sammie's interview included text that gave examples of this.

Deferral: "Waiting for the right time"

Sammie, responding to the vignette (#6), talked about an appropriate age for sexual knowledge. In this initial section, Sammie reflected on her reaction to Stephen telling Lucy, "and that's when I put my penis in your vagina". Sammie breathed in sharply. Drawing on my counselling experience to understand that an audible, non-verbal reaction had possible meaning, I asked what had Sammie experienced in hearing this story?

Sammie: Just – horror.

Researcher: Horror?

Sammie: Yeah.

Researcher: About?

Sammie: The poor little 7-year-old girl – and boy. Where... Yeah.

Researcher: Poor?

Sammie: Yeah, being exposed to that.

Researcher: To what?

Sammie: A 7-year-old girl being exposed to that sort of sexual talk. It's too young.

I noted a difference in Sammie's reaction depending on the gender of the child referred to. Sammie also justified 'age' as the reason why Lucy should not be "exposed to that sort of talk". This seems to assume that children should or should not hold particular sexual information. Did Sammie's words of "horror" and "poor little girl – and boy ... being exposed to that" imply something else? The unsaid could be, 'This should not be happening', 'this should not have happened'.

Stephen's speaking in this way to Lucy could be seen as excessive and transgressive – his words exceeding the bounds of expected children's knowledge. In Sammie's talk, it seemed more important to name that this was done to the girl first. The notions of size and age also featured as further necessary conditions for regulating children's knowing about sexuality. The phrase, "being exposed to", suggested a construction of vulnerability and helplessness through exposure to danger, which could be a typical heteronormative scenario of a female subject in need of saving and protection.

Sammie's addition of "and boy" to the adjectives "poor" and "little", showed concern for both genders, with some primacy for the girl. These two are children and should not know this information. Stephen was viewed as knowing more than he should. His innocence had been viewed as compromised. He may be conceivably viewed, therefore, as potentially dangerous – a knowledgeable male speaking sex to an unknowing female. From a feminist perspective, this could be

perceived within an adult discourse of gendered heterosexual sexuality, that the boy becomes an adult male pursuing a young female for sexual gratification. Given her words, “A 7-year-old girl being exposed to that sort of sexual talk. It's too young” hints at this more sinister view. Sammie’s use of the passive voice, in this moment, took the focus again away from Stephen. It is the position of ‘the girl’ that was reinforced in this language. For the girl, the harm was being exposed to this language. For the boy, the harm was having been exposed to some kind of knowledge before he should have been, and could also imply a harm that he had been exposed to this knowledge himself. Sammie’s words are an example of the rift in the universalised understanding of childhood innocence outlined earlier, where sexuality is viewed as irrelevant to children, and where children talking about sexuality is perceived as developmentally inappropriate.

Sammie’s response, about Stephen and his penis/vagina knowledge (in Vignette #6), forced a consideration, by her, of this boy as *a knowledgeable subject*. Sammie was troubled by Stephen’s knowledge. It was difficult for her to understand that Stephen had knowledge of the reproductive secret that defines the adult/child binary as knowing/ignorant or possibly sexual/innocent. Having noticed Sammie’s immediate attention to a 7-year-old girl being “too young” to know this, I asked:

Researcher: When is the right age?

Sammie: Yeah, well this is the big thing that is going on in my head right now. When is the right age? You see, I don't know. It's – it's a 9-year-old boy?

Researcher: No, seven.

Sammie: Oh seven, [a] 7-year-old boy.

Researcher: [Lucy] was six.

Sammie: Seven and six – I was thinking nine and seven, yeah, in my head.

Seven and six – where has Mr Seven Year Old heard that?

Several aspects of this excerpt show how Stephen was positioned as both child and adult. Sammie returned focus on Stephen and emphasised how young he was, but then ironically gave him an adult title, “Mr Seven Year Old”, thereby inverting a child position with an adult designation. The terminology that Stephen used calls Sammie to position Stephen differently from *normal* 7-year-old boys. Her dominant positioning within adult-child discourse would usually call her to treat Stephen as ignorant and unknowing about sex/sexuality, however he has this information. Yet it seemed that Stephen’s knowledge, in this case, was imbued with suspicion about where he got the information from and what he might do with it in the future. There was discomfort for Sammie about how to treat this knowledgeable boy: as an adult (in designation), but he is not an adult. There is a liminal position here between the adult-child binary, which she did not comment on openly, resulting in her ironic title, “Mr Seven Year Old”. Stephen had become an object created by a paternalistic adult view in which adults know what is best for children.

Sammie was informed by developmental discourses about 7-year-old and 6-year-old children, how they should act, what they should know. Developmental discourses endorse notions of sex/sexuality knowledge in children’s lives that are supposed to occur at biologically determined, appropriate stages (see Friedrich et al. 1991, 1993; Johnson, 1999; Lamb, 2006). Sammie appeared to draw upon discourses that claim children should not know about sexual intercourse at ages six to nine. However, she said “I don’t know” at what age access to this sexual

knowledge should be. Her not-knowing was, ironically, also a knowing. This was a claim about (not) knowing about when children can access knowledge of sex/sexuality. Within her talk, Sammie identified that children should not know about sex as reproduction.

At that point, I asked Sammie about where she thought a 7-year-old boy might have access to this knowledge.

Sammie: Older siblings, TV – if he's watching TV at home [pauses]... Oh gosh, how would he know that? A 7-year-old wouldn't be able to read that well. Parents talking maybe – I don't know, I don't know.

As in Chapter 6, Sammie's speech here included the use of repetition. The double use of 'I don't know' was given within talk that offered a range of possibilities, as if Sammie had some ideas but was hesitant to share. Further developmental ideas again surfaced in Sammie's language. Assumptions about knowledge of older children, about 7-year-old boys' reading ability and sexual knowledge, and lastly, about parental guidance within the home, emerged as statements of fact, truth claims of age and gender. Sammie wondered about possible sources of such information for Stephen, such as television or from hearing his parents talk. These appear to be private or covert sources of knowledge. Her words imply that this could have been overhearing rather than direct talk about sex. There does not seem to be any consideration to Sammie that Stephen's parents may have explicitly used this language to describe sex to him deliberately. It also seemed that she did hold knowledge about these possibilities although she had claimed "I don't know, I don't know". I asked if she had other ideas. She then described something her son had viewed on the internet:

Researcher: Any other ideas?

Sammie: Computer – if they've got exposure to [a] computer. I know an example of [my son]... he was eight, playing on *Minecraft* and I had gone on ... and checked it was okay, so I'd had a play – he'd showed me how it works and so I thought, 'Okay, that's alright.' My husband's in IT, so I'd checked with him, 'Is it safe?' 'Yeah, it all looks okay.' So that's fine. I was in the kitchen and heard him laughing, absolutely pissing himself with whatever he was laughing at. So I went round to see what was going on, he was on *Minecraft*. I said, 'What's so funny?' I didn't know that they could go onto YouTube and there were a whole lot of voice-over things. And he said, 'Oh look at this,' and he played it back to me - it was an American voice-over of someone that was playing with it and he'd built this big tall tower thing. And he [the voice on the screen] was saying, 'Oh, tall and straight, just like my penis.' 'Oh' – I said, 'that's not very nice is it? I don't think we'll be watching that one again.' And I diverted him and got him to come and help me with something – can't remember what it was. And so when [husband] came home I said, 'Did you know this?' We went on and there was stuff on there that was completely inappropriate, I felt, for an 8-year-old to be watching. And I hadn't even been aware...that was...[possible]

Sammie did know where and how children can access some sexual knowledge. This story contained a number of discourse possibilities. Her initial response to the child regarding the voice-over's statement was one of displeasure, "that's not very nice, is it?" She then closed down the possibility for discussion: "I diverted

him and got him to come and help me with something”. Shutting down possibilities for viewing and then for discussion suggested a form of censorship that closed possible opportunities for teaching and learning about online safety, but also about male physiology and sexual knowledge. Sammie’s diversion distracted and avoided the material that the boy had encountered and found entertaining and enjoyable. Sammie also distracted from possibilities for risqué humour, given he found it very funny. The *effects of power generated by what was said* could have produced a sense of shame (“that’s not very nice”), or a sense of discipline that her son had done something wrong (“I don’t think we’ll be watching that one again”). The humour had gone. The effects of power removed pleasure for Sammie’s son, a pleasure that was based on entertaining and enjoyable sexual imagery.

Boys experience erections from birth (Bancroft, 2004; Borneman, 1990; DeLamater & Friedrich, 2002) and 8-year-old boys do experience erections. However, it could be taken from this example of diversion that erections are also censored. An erection could signify readiness for sexual intercourse, but as noted in the Prologue, S. Jackson and Scott (2010) question the application of this singular meaning. In this example, it could simply represent humour for males comparing a tower with an erect penis. For Sammie, there may also have been fear about what kind of conversation might be opened up. She did not report her son asking ‘what’s not nice?’ Or, ‘what’s wrong with watching that?’ Or, ‘why is that not funny?’ It is possible that the child’s actions ensured there was no further discussion about erections, leading to talk about hormones, blood, sex and sexual intercourse. Closing down any opportunity for these possibilities, as seemed to have happened here with Sammie, engaged a discourse that children of an age

(particularly 8-year old-boys) should not know about sex as erections and certainly not as intercourse. Censorship and diversion are governance practices utilised within developmental discourses. Foucault (1978/1990) refers to “the logic of censorship” (p. 84) as one of the principal features of a representation of “power-law”.

In Sammie’s talk, parental “power-law” imposed silence that appeared to produce the erection as *the inexistent, the illicit, and the inexpressible*. It appears that Sammie’s own approach to parenting helps explain her response to the vignette. She presumably would not want her own children using these words. It was unclear, but it would have been useful to know whether she was concerned more about words like ‘penis’ or was troubled by the language and talk about the erection. Some insight into this question is shown in the next section.

Sammie later described talking to her son about sex/sexuality education and reproduction. She explained this as “the seed story”:

Sammie: We did the seed story [with our son]. And I too, use the appropriate words, 'cause I think it's better that they know what the correct terminology is. Yeah. I've got a friend who's done exactly that, who's explained exactly what happens. So – I don't know, it's hard isn't it? We chose not to tell him exactly what goes on, we're waiting for the right time and haven't got to that yet. But then – it's natural isn't it?

The use of a biological or gardening metaphor, “the seed story”, was mentioned here as a general knowledge about how parents inform children about reproduction. (Below, other stories of parents’ methods of euphemistically informing children about reproduction are presented and explored in more detail).

Sammie spoke here of using “the appropriate words”, “the correct terminology”, yet “we chose not to tell him exactly what goes on”. There was a *policing of statements* by Sammie, both in the story of telling her son about sex, and in the telling of this story to the researcher. A tension appeared between Sammie’s idea of what is appropriate and correct, and what exactly goes on, which tended to run all through her response. She expressed withholding information until the right time, and purported that *it* [sex?] is *natural*. Drawing on a nature discourse to uphold her argument, Sammie also questioned this, as if she, and/or the researcher, needed convincing (“But then – it’s natural isn’t it?”). Dingler (2005) contends that “nature becomes a discursive concept as each conceptual view of nature takes place within a discursive context” (p. 214). In other words, calling upon a nature discourse in the context of ‘sex as natural’ utilises relations of power/knowledge. Describing something as ‘natural’ locates it in the realm of nature. To claim ‘nature’ also invokes an unspoken claim to knowledge as scientific truth. The discourse of ‘natural/normal’, related to knowledge about sex/sexuality, however, does not hold certainty in this line of discussion. This language is a product of biopower; it produces force relations of power that position secret sex knowledge between parents and their child. Sammie’s thinking appeared aligned with Foucault’s description of children: “defined as ‘preliminary’ sexual beings, on this side of sex, yet within it, astride a dangerous dividing line” (1978/1990, p. 104).

Social, cultural and developmental discourses seemed to shape how Sammie and her husband told their son about reproductive sexuality - a partial story with ‘appropriate words’ and ‘correct terminology’ (“We chose not to tell him exactly what goes on”). The information left out of such a story, for example,

sexual intercourse, or ejaculation, or pleasure, could be used to give a more detailed account to “explain... exactly what happens”. The significance of this terminology and ‘exactly what happens’ must wait until their son is “at the right time” and they “haven’t got to that yet”. Sammie was asked about whether the right time might be when their son asks questions.

Sammie: Yeah, yeah – but probably ... Well I know that they get taught about sex at Intermediate [school] so there definitely has to be a conversation. I would prefer that came from us, than from someone else. I've always said to the kids if there's anything that they hear, or see, or something that happens at school or with their friends and they don't understand, to come and ask. And I will always explain. So I've said to them – this is contradictory isn't it? I will always explain what the truth is.

Sammie’s use of the phrase, “the truth”, questions whether there is a definitive truth about what is “taught about sex” that might be shared in conversation with their son. Claiming that she “will always explain” anything that her son might not understand, Sammie appears to realise a contradiction in what she has shared.

Sammie noted that sexuality education is provided at Intermediate School, but she held a preference that she and her husband would speak about sex to her son/children before then (age 11), as “I would prefer that came from us”. Sammie positioned herself and her husband as agentic parents, engaging in sexuality education with their child(ren). Yet, the event to initiate such a conversation did not seem parental intention, rather an anticipatory action to the fact that the school will be teaching their son some sexuality education. There was a strong idea that they, as parents, have to ‘get in first’. Parents are largely recognised as primary

educators of their children about sex and sexuality (Dyson & Smith, 2012; Stone, Bengry-Howell, Ingham & McGinn, 2014) with school sexuality education programmes supporting them in this. However, the relationship between parents and teachers as sexuality educators, and whether schools might have a larger role in this area, is contested (Robinson, 2013).

Sammie then relayed a story in which discursive practices of age, innocence and appropriateness together closed down the kind of agentic intention she claimed. She experienced a moment of contradiction in what she said: that she withheld information, but professed to be available always to explain (“I will always explain what the truth is”). This was presented as a partial truth to be incrementally told. The dilemma here, it appears, is that parents have a central role in the development and wellbeing of their child, but enacting this role can be fraught when there is no simple or certain truth. Sammie acknowledged that her children might hear about sex from others, but they needed to be appropriate people, using appropriate language.

Sammie: It doesn't mean that they necessarily are able to go and talk to everyone else about that, that might be a conversation that we just have among ourselves. And so, for example, we've got neighbours that use language that we don't deem as being appropriate...But the kids hear it over the fence. And so [9-year-old son] aged eight, asked what a 'fucking bitch' was. What is fucking? I didn't actually say [pauses]... what fucking would refer to, but I said that it wasn't a – it's not a nice word, and they were meaning it in a derogatory way, and – and he's an inquisitive kid so he would ask. So if he asked, I would probably tell him the truth.

There was a striking moment here of mutual acknowledgement and contradiction. Sammie acknowledged her intention to “tell him the truth” while earlier saying “this is contradictory – isn’t it?” In Foucault’s language, “the rules of propriety screened out some words: there was a policing of statements” (1978/1990, pp. 17-18). Sammie’s child came forth with his inquiry, but an inquiry that positioned her uncomfortably to tell ‘the truth’ or a version of what “fucking” is. She responded by hiding the literal complexity of the word behind a euphemistic phrase, “it’s not a nice word”. Adding to the complexity of this context is that the word was used as an insult, “in a derogatory way”, rather than a space in which any potential sexual meaning might be explained.

Sammie’s talk, in response to the story of Stephen telling Lucy about sex, demonstrated discursive practices that produced and reproduced language of dominant notions of normative childhood and of children as innocent. In the struggle to think at what age children might be informed of sex as reproduction, there was no certainty and no clarity about what to speak or when. Sammie’s talk represented parental/maternal discourses that tell about care for children (“poor little girl – and boy”), having a preference to educate their child about sex and reproduction (“I would prefer that came from us”), and struggling to have language or knowledge about what to say or when (“we chose not to tell him exactly what goes on, we’re waiting for the right time”). Associated discursive practices that (re)produce a child’s ignorance of sexual reproductive knowledge include *disciplinary techniques with regulative methods* that hide knowledge and engage in the *slow surfacing of confidential statements* regarding sex as reproduction. Toni’s interview presented examples of practices which included these methods.

Obfuscation: Keeping it vague

Toni, a parent of two children, responded to the vignette about Stephen and Lucy (Vignette #6) with an account of talk that heightens tension involved in public/private speech and action about children and sexuality. Toni was asked what she thought about a 7-year-old boy inquiring about ‘where babies come from’ being told about intercourse.

Researcher: So, what do you think of that kind of information being shared with a boy aged seven?

Toni: I think it's too young, to be honest with you.

Researcher: Too young?

Toni: I think it's too young, and I think we just have to say – let's just be vague. And when they ask questions like that – we just say, around the thing, we say, 'Look, Mummy gets pregnant, and like you plant a seed in the flower pot,' or something. I used to use with my kids, animals mating. They saw it on TV on the Discovery Channel. They saw how animals mate. And you just use the word, 'Look, that's how the animals mate, that's how – you know.' And you just be vague ...

Toni's use of vagueness appears to offer ideas for the *slow surfacing of confidential statements* about sex, of deception and of safety for a child deemed “too young”. Fitting within a discourse of child innocence, vague descriptions of sexual intercourse here draw upon metaphors of seeds in flowerpots and animals mating. Vagueness is produced as a practice of withholding information, yet Toni engaged specific images of animals mating. Images of human sexuality and

animal instinct are conflated in this vague telling. Popular music and video genre may possibly have effects for parents and children, such as Bloodhound Gang's "The Bad Touch" (Jimmy Pop, 1999), which features the line, "You and me baby ain't nothin' but mammals, so let's do it like they do on the Discovery Channel." Ideas of 'mating' connect with Frayser's (2003) dominant notion of a reproductive cultural map for sexual behaviour, and with Foucault's (1978/1990) *scientia sexualis*, of "procedures for telling the truth of sex which are geared to a form of knowledge-power" (p. 58). Frayser (2003) identifies (particularly Western) cultural maps of sex/sexual behaviour as dominated by "a reproductive model of adult sexuality" (p. 263). This model not only identifies that "sex became an important way to distinguish between childhood and adulthood" (p. 263), but excludes other cultural maps of sex/sexuality, including sex as recreational and relational. The language used by Toni produced an instrumental notion of sex/sexuality – one devoid of relational sexuality and initiations into pleasure.

Responding to the vagueness in Toni's description of human reproductive sex as mating like animals, she was then asked more about this.

Researcher: So you talk about Mum and Dad mating?

Toni: You could just say, 'You see the animal like that.' I didn't specifically say, 'That's how the baby gets into your tummy.'... And then what I do too is, 'There's a sperm and there's an egg.' I don't tell them where... 'Daddy provides the sperm and Mummy provides an egg.' There – and I even draw, 'There's an egg.' And then the sperm swimming into the egg, and that's how a baby is made.

Toni's description of conception shifted from an image of mating animals, to a pictorial sperm and egg – but remained vague, "I don't tell them where". Whether on farms, or with pets (such as dogs and rabbits, for example), children can easily have access to witnessing animals' sexual activity (e.g., Moll's, 1909/1912, comment on children's curiosity with animals, p. 212). The *secret* of human intercourse, in Toni's thinking, cannot be shared with a 7-year-old. Children should not know about sex as reproduction. In contrast, knowledge about conception, through watching animals mating on the Discovery Channel, and through a drawing of egg and sperm, can be shared. Toni was asked at what age she gave this explanation to her children.

Toni: I talked to them when they were about eight... I didn't tell them the
– about the ... about the details,

Researcher: Of sex.

Toni: Yeah. But, when they go to Intermediate [school], that's when I
started with my girl, I started [to] tell her about the exact detail.
But when I tell her, I said to her, 'Don't tell your younger siblings.
Because you're up to the age now that I think I should tell you,
because in the playground, especially at intermediate, kids that age
are having sex.' And I will tell her, 'You know, you don't do it, it's
not right.'

Researcher: So you know that kids at intermediate age are having sex?

Toni: Yes, because I was a kid before – and when I was at Intermediate, I
hear a lot of things and I learned about sexual education outside in
the playground ... I just couldn't believe it, they would go through
every detail from French kissing, to having sex, to everything. And

I just thought, 'Whoa.' And that's when ... From my own experience, and I know nowadays, from my day – if they started doing that, from my day, it will [now] be worse. So that's why I wanted to prepare my daughter.

Toni's statement that children at intermediate school "are having sex" and talking about sex in the playground did not shock me, but I had some surprise at how casually this was said. There is an interesting distinction between a kind of acceptance that other people's "kids that age are having sex" (i.e., children aged 11-13 years) and a clear understanding for her own child, "you don't do it, it's not right".

Toni was not asked about "the exact detail" and what that might be in language for an 8-year-old girl. I was positioned in gender discourse, vulnerable as a man asking a woman questions about talking to her child/daughter about sex. Toni might have thought that "the exact details" gave adequate information to me. Curiously, this description aligned with Sammie's friend who, to her own child, "explained exactly what happens", but was in contrast to Sammie's choosing "not to tell [her son] exactly what goes on".

In Toni's talk, there are assumptions about who has authority to induct children into sexual knowledge. Toni has this authority as a mother, but her older daughter does not have that authority to tell her younger siblings. Sammie, spoke of the preference that she and her husband speak to their son about sex before they hear from teachers at school. Yet this understanding has implications for children, and distinct implications for girls and boys. Toni's sharing of information is to protect her daughter, "You know, you don't do it, it's not right". Considering the discourse of innocence, which is dominated by the idea that absence of sexual

knowledge for children is for their protection, Toni's idea here speaks in some contrast. However, here girls are positioned as responsible: to hold the secret from younger children, and not to implement their knowledge ("not do it"). By "start[ing to] tell her about the exact detail" of sex, Toni is intervening with her 8-year-old daughter to anticipate knowledge coming from elsewhere, particularly from the school playground. This language produces power effects in the sharing of knowledge, a language of discipline: "you don't do it". This censorship of the telling ("mating") and the censorship within the telling ("don't tell your younger siblings") produces a policing of sex. Governing her daughter's sexuality through a confined description of sex, this language is a discursive practice that produces a *slow surfacing of confidential statements* about eggs and seeds, about mating, and then (possibly) about "the exact detail".

Within Toni's statement that, "kids at that age [at Intermediate] are having sex", there was an unspoken assumption that this referred to heterosexual sex. There was no question about sex as being outside the heterosexual norm. Toni's description that "they would go through every detail" about sex from kissing "to having sex, to everything" is interesting. Somehow, some of the children when she was aged around 11 to 13 years old had access to this knowledge and were not constrained to share this with their peers. Toni reflected further the ideas of Foucault's pedagogization of children's sex, that "at the same time 'natural' and 'contrary to nature,' this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers" (1978/1990, p. 104). Through her intention of telling her daughter, Toni wanted to "prepare" her, "if they start doing that, from my day, it will [now] be worse". The assumption was that the sharing of sexual knowledge

by children is *bad*, and that the passage of historical time will mean that children's sharing of this knowledge is *worse* than it was when she was a child.

Returning to the vignette, Toni reflected again on age:

Toni: But five years old, even seven years old – [is] too young...I [think] that Intermediate age is ... when they start puberty. And when their body changes, that's when you start to tell them. But as an adult, you can gloss over things, you know. You can do that.

Again, Toni anticipated preparing her child with information before she meets it from her peers. There is a thread between Toni's and Sammie's stories, as mothers, who want to be the first to explain to their children about sex/sexuality/sexual intercourse.

Toni's talk included biological ideas of growth and development, and social and cultural norms to define the appropriate time for informing children about sexuality. Puberty, as a biological stage of development, was seen by her as the sign for a version of sexuality information in which "you can gloss over things". I explored this process of 'glossing' with her.

Toni: Because the thing is, if you give them too many details, they will [pause]. They don't have [the] mental capacity to understand and they could go [and] do the same thing, like the child observes talking in the playground and then you get into a compromised position. And I don't think they understand it all, and so that's why I gloss over, until they know about [pause]. One day, when they grow bigger, then I'll tell them.

'Glossing over' presented a new understanding of Toni's use of planting a seed in a flowerpot and of animals mating. Glossing over performs a step, a *slow*

surfacing, within a process for children to come from ignorance about *confidential statements* on sexuality, into a graduated process towards knowledge. Within the vagueness of glossing over, children are given partial information, there is *a policing of statements* intended to support safety, and being prepared. However, a possible effect of partial information is that of risk. Within the partial and vague glossed over account of sexual function (i.e., reproductive) is the absence of any relational and emotional aspects of sex/sexuality.

While using age as normative criteria for sharing information on sex with children, Toni spoke differently from others about sharing information with children. She presented a story from her own experience to describe her own thinking and practices with her children. Further, Toni's descriptions of her assessment of children's mental capacity and their inability to process such sexual information, revealed a particular set of relations of power within adult-child relationships. She assumed that a child may be interested to act on what they learn (a further example of the myth as described by Robinson, 2013). In these tellings, children were positioned to know and not know about sex as reproduction. Foucault's concept of governmentality provides a lens through which to analyse Sammie's and Toni's language as examples of how the concept of biopolitics interfaces with the idea of childhood.

Biopolitics: The subjectification of children as naïve

Biopolitics subjectifies all children, regulating the individual child within childhood, rather than responding to individual subjects. As parents, Sammie and Toni exercise power-law over childhood, not only their children. Within the discursive texts they speak, relational biopower has effects for childhood

discourses. Sammie and Toni, as adults, are also shaped by these power/knowledge effects. While Sammie called upon ideas of *truth* and ‘correct terminology’, the ‘right’ time, and Toni claimed that vagueness is necessary to inform her daughter, they were positioned within discourses on adult-child relations of power/knowledge. The contradiction in their speaking belied their claims and sense of responsibility as parents, and this contrasted with speaking as parents who do not tell the truth. As such, both Sammie and Toni were positioned to police childhood and to discipline the child’s sexuality, and their own children’s sex, “through useful and public discourses” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 25) that regulate when and what children should know about sex as reproduction.

Toni talked about telling her daughter about sex when she was starting at Intermediate School. This was because of Toni’s experience of learning about sex from her peers in the playground (“kids that age are having sex”). The ‘truth’ of childhood’s earlier sexual development is evidenced both by Toni’s related experience, and by Sammie’s references to friends and media. Together, they use speech that acts and constitutes one possible reality of sexuality in the lives of children. This reality, in their speaking, is experienced by children at an earlier stage than each of these parents would prefer. This reality edges upon the transgressive notion of children losing innocence through having knowledge sooner than developmental discourses ideally suggest. Yet, there is a sense of normative developmental ‘reality’ here, and of readiness or timeliness that children are introduced or informed about sex and sexual interest in others. While both mothers talk here about introducing sexual knowledge to their children, to Sammie’s son and Toni’s daughter, this was constructed in ways that was partial knowledge.

The effects of power are illuminated here by what was said when Sammie's and Toni's talk positioned children as ignorant and without information, and adults as withholding information to sustain children's ignorance. Sammie and Toni's narratives, employing gardening and biological narratives of 'daddy plants a seed in mummy's tummy' and 'sperm and egg', show how access to knowledge is hidden from children's sexual knowing through the biopolitics of adult/parent regulation of children's access to knowledge of reproduction. Through governmentality of children's subjectivities, age is used as a disciplinary tool to determine access to reproductive knowledge. Yet, there is uncertainty as to the appropriate age for knowing. Children's knowing is repressed by confining sexual knowledge through obscure speech and the policing of statements about sexual reproduction, along with fluid ideas of an age for knowledge on sex. The social norms related to age and maturity, explored next in Sandra's talk, act to police parental and family practices of what is public and what is private.

7.2 Practices that confine knowledge of sex as reproduction

Foucault (1978/1990) wrote that attempts in history to repress talk about sexuality have, "rather than a massive censorship ... [have instead] involved ... a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse" (p. 34). Adult endeavours to hide sexual knowledge of reproduction from children have been often thwarted by children's curiosity and *incitement*. One of the *disciplinary techniques* or devices of this repressive hypothesis, that children should not know sex/sexuality, is *obscure speech*, sanitised to confine knowledge of sexuality. This could be seen in Sandra's interview.

Boundaries: “The line has to be drawn somewhere”

Sandra, a therapist, responded to the story of Deirdre kissing Frank (Vignette #2).

She drew upon ideas of boundaries between public and private and made links between home and school, and age and intimacy.

Sandra: It could be innocent, it could be not. I still think there’s some boundaries at school around no kissing at school.

Researcher: Can I ask why you say that?

Sandra: Because it’s that – I don’t know, why do I say that? No kissing at school – well, it’s kind of public behaviour that maybe should be a bit more private. And school is a place for learning and friendships. I think there’s a time and place for kissing and school is not it.

Researcher: So when I ask about you saying this is public and it should be private, what’s your thinking behind that?

Sandra: It’s intimate, I guess, I’m thinking, well, that’s a different issue. ...
In terms of the next step, what would be the next step after kissing?
You know, the line has to be drawn somewhere

Through commenting that the kiss “could be innocent, it could be not”, Sandra highlighted succinctly a dilemma that many adults face with understanding the complexity about sexuality when regarding children’s actions. There is possibly a tricky question in this remark that demarcates an action (kissing) from the child who is either innocent or not (i.e., deviant?). It is hard to know whether the space determines innocence or deviance, but Sandra stated the idea of spaces as public and private, and ideas of some actions signifying intimacy, therefore “maybe it should be a bit more private”. This in itself is problematic, considering that

children kissing in private could be more concerning than witnessing this action in public. Sandra's idea of privacy could therefore be directed towards adult kissing/sexual behaviour.

Frayser (2003) reflects on expanded interpretations of what actions are viewed as sexual, which can include looks and touch. In this talk, the sexual includes children kissing. There is a caution in Sandra's language that "the line has to be drawn somewhere" since "the next step after kissing" opens the possibility of what is not clear: non-penetrative sexual activity? Intercourse? Sandra asked, "what would be the next step after kissing?" She accessed some cultural knowledge suggesting curiosity about sex/sexuality knowledge is risky. This caution can be associated to Levine's (2002) comment on how kissing may be viewed as "step one of sex" (p. 8). Sandra's caution also exposes a discourse of taboo, that kissing is private and intimate and not permitted in school or in public. The school was marked in this talk as a particular site in which private actions have no place; it is a public space. Subsequently, the school may be considered a space in which sexuality has no place. By closing possibilities for relational actions, such as kissing, within the child's educational institution of learning, what space is available for the child to learn about relational actions that may include kissing and other potential sexual actions? Children should not kiss at school, it seems, because kissing could lead to talk and curiosity about sex, and children should not talk or know about sex. Sandra's words connect with Foucault's (1978/1990) thinking, "It would be less than exact to say that the pedagogical institution has imposed a ponderous silence on the sex of children and adolescents" (p. 29). The school, according to the discourse that Sandra is positioned within, is not a space for kissing.

Talk of boundaries (e.g., “the line has to be drawn somewhere”) constructs the school as a space where boundaries are learned and policed. The boundaries were specified as the binary of private/public and kissing/“the next step”. In Sandra’s talk, kissing and sex were conflated and both are beyond ‘the line that has to be drawn’. The language that Sandra used in her talking relates to Blaise’s (2010) and Robinson’s (2013) notion of how kissing in childhood is constructed normatively to create dominant heterosexual discourse. Yet, for the innocent child, kissing is discouraged as potentially dangerous and leading to risk. Ideas of boundaries can also be found within the home, and between family members. Whereas Sandra focussed on boundaries, Jayne spoke about boundaries differently between intergenerational and sibling-sister differences.

Silence: Old school discomforts with reproduction

Jayne, an experienced teacher, responded to the scenario about Stephen telling Lucy about sex (Vignette #6), reflecting on her own children coming to know about sex.

Jayne: ...I know, certainly my oldest two (I haven’t had to with the youngest ones, because they’ve gotten all their information from the older kids), but I know with [daughter], it was ‘daddy had planted a seed in my tummy’ and those sorts of things. And that’s why we had to be careful with our bodies and our private parts because that was what they were designed for and everything like that.

Jayne’s description of sex information to her children related to the standard gardening metaphor (‘daddy had planted a seed in mummy’s tummy’). She

reproduced a reproductive narrative or cultural map (see Frayser, 2003): “that was what they [bodies] were designed for and everything like that”. This telling was for her older children, since she believed that her younger children had “gotten all their information from the older kids”. This differs from Toni’s story, where she told her older daughter not to tell her younger siblings. A partial telling about sex by a mother to her daughters, such as Jayne’s, “to be careful with our bodies and our private parts”, connects with Toni’s story (“you don’t do it, it’s not right”).

Jayne’s focus on reproduction incites a sex discourse that is simultaneously hiding information of sex as reproduction.

Jayne: And some parents are a lot more open than others ... my sister was really, really open, to the point where it made me feel uncomfortable, with her daughter.

Given Jayne’s mention of being “with her [sister’s] daughter”, it was not clear whether the discomfort related more specifically to girls knowing about sex rather than boys. On the other hand, might this have indicated a mother’s aim to be protective of her daughter? This gendered speech is not clear, but produces an effect of power in which gender and age are located together as sites for regulation. This gendered discourse persisted as Jayne continued to speak.

Jayne: Oh I guess my parents were reasonably old school and it’s not nice to talk about our bodies and our vaginas and everything like that.

‘Old school’ refers to traditional or old-fashioned ways or values, in which “verbal decency sanitized one’s speech” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 3). Within a white European (Western) cultural context, in New Zealand, one meaning that could be attributed is that of British colonial thinking and attitudes about sex

where “sexuality was carefully confined... On the subject of sex, silence became the rule” (p. 3).

As Jayne continued her story of discomfort, echoes of practices more past than present can be found, about where, when and with whom present might there be a conversation that is deemed one for the private domain of family:

Jayne: ... my sister - I don't know why - when her daughter was born she was very, very, you know, about answering questions honestly and openly. But always giving the anatomical terms and I guess it did embarrass me because, at time, I thought, 'we're at the dinner table', or 'we're sitting down trying to watch TV', or have a glass of wine or something, and my sister is talking about where poos come from and talking all about the intestines and I'd be 'ohhhh....god, do we always have to have these sorts of conversations' and it didn't embarrass her at all! Whereas, you know, I'd be sitting there, my husband would be, 'gawd she's at it again', sort of thing.

For Jayne's sister, the “answering questions openly and honestly” with her own daughter could be reasoned as a protective act by preventing risk from harm. This reasoning aligns with the theory supporting child protection programmes aimed at sexual abuse prevention, for example, the *Keeping Ourselves Safe* programme. In such programmes, it is argued that using the ‘correct’ anatomical names for genitals provides children with knowledge to support safety and to give clear information if abuse occurs. Jayne was willing to enter a reflective position here, echoing one that many people would identify with. Questions of public and private contexts arose in Jayne's story about her sister's openness to discussing

functional bodily processes, initially, neither were examples about sex, but a discomfort with open discussion about bodies.

Jayne: I think as you get older you get less shy about things like that but certainly when we were growing up, you didn't talk about sex. At all! And my mother's rationale, and she only said this a few years ago, 'but we didn't want you to be curious about it and go out and do it'. And we're Catholics, I mean of course, you know. It was a very taboo subject.

As Jayne reflected on her own childhood, "you didn't talk about sex" [with her parents], she also commented on her mother's words, "we didn't want you to be curious about it and go out and do it".

These cultural and social practices are recorded historically. The Mazengarb Report (see Mazengarb, 1954) had effects for social expectations on parents in New Zealand from the 1950s, where fear and panic was encouraged through a myth that, if children knew about sex, then they would likely "go out and do it". This moral climate supported the reproduction and policing of ideas about 'responsible parenthood', much in the vein of the moral hygiene movement of the late nineteenth century. Donnelly's (1978) view also echoes this perspective of New Zealand society, when he recounts the "separation of the sexual from the rest of our lives" (p. 171). He claims, "There has been a massive plot to keep children ill-informed which has made them rely on the misinformation of their peers" (p. 172). Robinson (2013) refers to this fear of children acting out their curiosity as a myth, and that children are not more likely to act upon knowledge when it is shared with them. Jayne's comments seem to echo anxieties from those earlier eras.

Jayne added one further insight, introducing another discursive setting: the church and morality. This talk acknowledged the influence of “the ecclesiastical institution”, which Foucault comments that “the sexuality of children was already problematized in the spiritual pedagogy of Christianity” (1978/1990, p. 117). Jayne’s words, “We’re Catholics”, and “it was a very taboo subject”, hint at the discursive effects of religious practices that hide sex knowledge and treat it as “taboo”, restricted and repressed. Positions within Christian discourses on sexuality do vary, but Jayne’s language positions the productive power of sexuality in Catholic/Christian discourse as ‘taboo’. As Foucault offered, “the idea of “sex” ... enables one to conceive power solely as law and taboo” (1978/1990, p. 155). The prohibitive custom of church teaching, together with social norms, held parents accountable for their children’s actions. “We are often reminded of the countless procedures which Christianity once employed to make us detest the body” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 159). In Jayne’s worldview, the view of old school Catholics, sexuality is *not* to be spoken about with children. It is a view in which “modern puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 5). Furthermore, Jayne’s talk resonates with cultural knowledge that pronounces curiosity about sex as risky. Like Sandra, who asked above, “what would be the next step after kissing?” and Jayne in her response, it is feared that children may “go out and do it”. The sections of transcript about boundaries and silence explored how speech is sanitised to confine children’s sexual knowledge. It is about talk that does not speak openly, it is about what is knowledge for private talk and not in the public domain. Patsy’s focus was on honesty.

Transparent use of adult language: “You need to be honest with them”

Patsy, another parent, responded to the part of the vignette where Stephen asked his mother where babies come (Vignette #6), and his mother had told him.

Patsy I think if the parent – if the children ask, you need to be honest with them. And you have to use the correct terminology as well.

For Patsy, there was no sense of withholding knowledge, or promoting the kind of naïve innocence other participants had about children. This was a curious position given the previous talk of vagueness, waiting for the right time, or other talk sustaining ignorance, used by other participants.

Patsy: ... like that's their body and if you make up names for things, or parts of their body, then other children or parents or adults at school, they're not going to know what you're talking about. So I think you need to use the correct terminology for body parts.

It sounded as if Patsy had already used this ‘correct terminology’ with children.

Later, there was dialogue during the interview about children’s curiosity. I used this to introduce a question to Patsy about when and how her children might be informed about sex as reproduction.

Patsy They are, yeah. And they want to know. Yeah.

Researcher: So in their curiosity around areas of sexuality and sexual information, is it okay to ask if you and your husband thought about who and how your boys are informed around that?

Patsy No, we haven’t actually talked about that. Yeah, but now it's

probably [relevant] with the older one being nine, we need to start thinking about that sort of thing. But we haven't actually talked about, you know, how we're going to approach that subject.

The speaking of 'terminology' is a discursive practice that produces moral and political positionings about sharing sexuality information, so that children's knowledge of sexuality is constructed as ignorant. Patsy's talk of honesty, when asked, also produced honesty about not having talked with her husband about "how we're going to approach that subject" of sexuality. This sharing information with children is confronted with a lack of preparation. In this moment, the withholding of knowledge, or naïve innocence is located with parents who want honesty but may not have experienced the space or language to talk to each other about talking to their children. In this setting, Patsy and her husband could be constructed as parents and adults within the same innocent childhood discourse that, in her talk, she was trying to resist by stating her intention to be honest. Another possibility is that Patsy and her husband may have only just considered that their child might express some curiosity soon (at age nine) that could require more than 'correct terminology' for body parts. With a 9-year-old son, Patsy's talk of the "need to start thinking about that sort of thing" connects with Sammie's consideration earlier, about what age is the 'right time' for boys to be talked to about sex. The language about correct or right terminology continued within the parents' group interview.

Technological accuracy: "The right terminology"

The interview held at South School with the parents' group comprised six women and one man, echoed a thread of talk about 'terminology'. The male participant

spoke little, and his speaking is not included here. Some of the mothers reflected upon generational difference and language/terminology, as Jayne had, and talked about descriptions of how they shared with children where babies come from.

Liz: We're a different generation to what our parents were, we grew up for a long time thinking something was a flower or what else mum called it...

Anne: Or the bird, what is it? The bird that delivered the babies

Joan: The stork!

Grace: Yeah, my dad...even said to my [children] the other day, 'Mum found you in a cabbage patch'. I was like, 'Geez, dad!' So I think it's probably a generational thing. Now I feel we're more accepting to [pause] we want to bring our kids up well informed, we want the best for them and whether that's going to be to our detriment I don't know, but that's just where we're at.

Grace's talk alluded to intentions of being "more accepting" and wanting to "bring our kids up well informed", although there is some uncertainty. A generational difference is highlighted around language and intending to provide information. In a longer excerpt, Grace again spoke about having "that truthful conversation".

Grace: ...if my kids came home and said to me, 'how are babies made?' my first comment would be, 'how do you think they're made?' and they would tell me [what they understand]. And then, if they were, like, 'no Mum, how ...' because I've just recently had this conversation with my 8-year-old [daughter], 'how are they really made, Mum?' And I'm like, 'your mummy loves your daddy, and

daddy's sperm fertilises mummy's egg'. And she was like, 'I don't want to know any more!' But I was actually thinking I need to probably tell her straight up what it's like, because she's not going to actually want the fairy version, the flowery version of it, if she's asking me, because I know where she's at in her life now. ...I know she's eight and not seven, but if she had of come home with that at seven, and quite persistent about it, I think I probably would have got to the point where I would have had to have said it. For a long time she thought every time my husband and I kissed that we were having sex – 'oh, you're having sex again, mum' ... 'do you actually know what sex is?' ... 'Yeah, it's when you do that' ... 'No it's not when we do that actually', and left it at that. But, I just know my kids; I know actually that at whatever age they're at, if they get to the point where they want to know, I would have that truthful conversation with them.

Grace's talk about sharing information with her child opened possibilities for speaking further about knowledge of reproduction, "I think I probably would have got to the point where I would have had to have said it [i.e., explained intercourse?]" In a position of privilege within discourses of education, class and employment, Grace could think about her 8-year-old child as an active and agentive learner – curious at times. Her thinking was, that when those times arose, she would be truthful about sex: "I know actually that at whatever age they're at, if they get to the point where they want to know, I would have that truthful conversation with them". This narrative stands in contrast to other stories of vagueness and not sharing exactly what goes on.

In the parents' group interview, a number of participants explored language to describe genitals. This language holds some sexual power/knowledge. Knowing the "correct terminology" was viewed in different ways. Responses to Stephen talking to Lucy about intercourse (Vignette #6) ranged from shock to humour.

Marie: That's shocking! Does he [Stephen] even know that's where it
 [penis?] goes?

Liz: Haven't you got that book at home? ...there's some children that
 do know that.

Joan: ...I've got a book that tells them!

Heather: I was going to say, 'hallelujah' – he's using the right terminology!
 Better then 'pee-pee' ...

Grace: It sounds like it's straight out of a book.

Anne: My initial thought was it was copied from someone or
 somewhere...

The 'right terminology' presupposes a sense of formal language, a book language, that suggests children generally learn a colloquial language or common parlance within their family, for example, the words "willie" and "flower" for a penis and vagina. This family vernacular comprises *disciplinary techniques with regulative methods* that hide knowledge of sex/sexuality. Within a form of *obscure speech* that confines sexuality, it positions children as naïve and safe, cute and innocent.

A number of parents in the group commented about the use of 'right terminology'.

Joan: ...my parents were fiercely, 'you must use the right terminology',

and it made me feel embarrassed – I hated that I had to say the right words. So my children know the right terminology but they have the [colloquial] words they use as well.

Marie added,

...it came up for [child's name], because we've always called it in a different language, my mum's language¹⁴, the name of your private parts...but then in one of his classes, and he came home, and he said, 'it's not called that mum'. He thought that was the actual English language... 'I was told today by my teacher it's called a penis' – he was so upset, and I said, 'Oh, it is the word, that's the English word', but [mum's word] that's the word we've always used.

When Heather said, "They hadn't done the unit on the penis going into the vagina!" Joan replied,

That's a whole different kettle of fish for me! 'I've got a vagina, I've got a penis', I can deal with that but I don't think my children – well, who knows? – but I haven't taught them it [about intercourse].

These mothers, within humorous and serious sharing in the Parents' Group, explored tensions between the use of terminology, and what level of information sharing they might engage in with their children. The power effect of terminology, whether colloquial or "correct", offered these parents positions in which to govern their children's knowledge, and ways to discipline their knowing about sex as reproduction.

¹⁴ Marie's mother's first language was not English

A dominant thread of talk in the parents' group talk, as with Sammie, Toni and Patsy, was their desire as parents to be the ones to inform their children about sex as reproduction. Grace reflected:

It kind of makes me think, though, that if my kids were at school and they came back and told me [they had been told about sex]... it kind of makes me want to be the first person to talk to them about that – not hear it from Jo and Tom in the playground.

While this thread of talk, about parents wanting to tell their children about sex before peers and teachers, can be analysed within discursive power relations of adult/child knowledge, there was care with which these parents spoke for how children learn this knowledge, and their concern for a safe context at the time of learning.

Joan: And yet in the same but not same context our dogs just been de-sexed and [son] was asking me all about 'what happens in the testicles? Why has he not got those any more?' or "What's happened to them?' because they were quite large before this operation and so we've had quite an in depth conversation about that. But because he asked he wouldn't stop at the flowery answer.

Researcher: So those opportunities have been useful?

Joan: Yeah. When they've gauged when they've wanted to know rather than sitting them down at five and saying 'right, this is how it happens.'

In contrast, two of the mothers in the Parents' Group were midwives. Their discussion included a level of openness to children about birth events that connected to "how babies are made".

Heather: That's where midwives are a bit different, I think. They live it, you know.

Liz: Yeah, ...my 7-year-old attended the birth of [his sister] so he's seen it, he knew exactly what happened and got to sit there and inspect.

This brought forth other stories from the group of parents about children at births.

Grace: My children have been to births, but they haven't seen the actual act of making the baby. That's totally different!

Heather: At that point a 7-year-old sees the birth, you actually have to prepare them for why it's going to happen, so he was quite well informed prior to the birth, of how it actually occurred and why it happened and the next part of it...Because he did go into town and tell everyone in a shop what the placenta was like!

Marie: My children have been to all our births and my sister's births. They've all been there, but we still wouldn't bring up the...we'd still talk about it like you did, 'mummy and daddy love each other'...and even my 4-year-old, 'the baby grows in the tummy'.

The Parents' Group interview held mixed responses to what children could be told, and mixed experiences for children, such as attending the birth of children, whether it may have been their siblings or others. During this discussion, age did not appear to be such a factor in children's access to knowledge.

A disciplinary power remained in this group's sharing, so that knowing about sex retains the *slow surfacing of confidential statements*. This slow surfacing was evident when one mother stated, "you actually have to prepare them for why it's going to happen, so he was quite well informed prior to the birth, of

how it actually occurred and why it happened and the next part of it". A story of birth, and a child's attendance to witness another child's birth, was viewed as "preparation". Another mother questioned that kind of knowing, about birth, compared to knowledge of sex, "they haven't seen the actual act of making the baby. That's totally different!" A third mother agreed, confining sexuality through *obscure speech*: "we still wouldn't bring up the [act of sex]...we'd still talk about it like you did, 'mummy and daddy love each other'."

Bio-power: Governmentality practices that hide reproductive knowledge of sexuality

When these women's talk is analysed using Foucault's concept of governmentality, a notion of bio-power emerges acting on individuals as parents, teachers and therapists. The focus was not just on children. Adults too were subject to the influence of bio-power; they were discursively directed to hide knowledge and misinform children about sex and reproduction.

This governance of children, through discourses on innocence and naivety, exposed power relations that are found in everyday text of talk and actions. The reproductive knowledge of sexuality was confined by adults in practices that spoke of defining boundaries of private and public spaces, as Sandra did, and also as boundaries of specific social practice – such as the action of kissing between children and what "the next step" might be. The production of boundaries was further explored within family stories and religious discourse by Jayne. Parents who were "old school" about talk of sexuality and who confined knowledge by not speaking it, were compared with her sister, who was 'open and honest' in talking about bodies with her children. Discomfort with open discussion about

bodies is an effect of bio-power. This discomfort was produced through family and religious messages of morality and the risk of potential harm that proposed children with knowledge would act on it. Patsy's talk showed that parents' intentions to share sexual knowledge are also bound within cultural discourses that hide knowledge by limiting talk about sex to names of body parts and not being ready or prepared to talk beyond this labelling of genitals. Patsy and other parents spoke their intentions to be 'honest' about sexuality and using "the correct terminology" with their children.

How can these expressed intentions be analysed? Could this mean that current information given to children was dishonest or incorrect in its terminology? What are the relations of power involved in the talk about how and what to tell their children about sexual reproduction? Members of the parents' group talked, similarly to Patsy, about using "the right terminology", and shared differing perspectives on the level of information they might tell their respective children. Through this interview a number of parents spoke to the ways that they resisted dominant discursive practices of bio-power, and told their children about sexual reproduction. This position to speak knowledge of sexual reproduction with their children appeared related to various subjectivities that these parents identified with, namely their gender, culture, a level of higher education, professional careers and for two, careers as midwives where talk of babies, birth and sex was more familiar and an frequent discourse in that occupation. Nonetheless, these examples of sharing information to children about sexual reproduction were not typical of all parents who participated.

Chapter summary: Children should not know about sex as reproduction

This chapter analysed the particular talk that constructs the child as ignorant of sexual reproduction. Three specific strategies were isolated in this talk. First, the talk that participants used produced the child as subject ignorant of sexuality. This occurred through particular practices that shape the child as vulnerable to sexual knowledge, expose practices that shape adults as responsible holders of this knowledge thereby constructing an adult-child binary, producing moral panic about internet technology, and rationalising parental censorship of sexual knowledge by children. Second, obscure speech (re)produced a confined knowledge of reproductive sexuality. This talk functioned to both hide and reveal knowledge to children and appears to have generational/genealogical history in family, social, and religious settings. Sexual knowledge is located within public and private spaces. Third, the knowledge of sexual reproduction that is shared with children is partial, incomplete, ambiguous, and only what is ‘appropriate’, constructing childhood as a time of ignorance.

Constructed particularly as heteronormatively gendered, children were positioned as vulnerable subjects within an age of risk. By using euphemistic language that partially informs children about sexual reproduction, adults provided ‘appropriate’ information at an ‘appropriate’ age. Hiding aspects of sexual knowledge when sharing aspects of reproductive sexual knowledge brings forth questions about what and why certain aspects are more available to children than others. Many adults think children’s agency in learning does not progress beyond what trusted adults might tell them about sex. Childhood discourses appear to lull adults into an erroneous and false security about child innocence

and safety through ideas of partialness and vagueness, where some knowledge is seen to be sufficient to prepare children for what they will see and hear at school. What emerges is that children's sexual subjectivities are contained and repressed by the policing of boundaries between what is designated 'private' and 'public'.

Participants' talk included what is said *and* what is not said to children. There was a hiding of some knowledge related to sex/sexuality, and a selectivity about what information is made known. Consequently, there was a *disciplining* of childhood as *unknowing* (or partial-knowing) and *having no sex*. This talk opened possibilities for participants in which the child was both knowledgeable and ignorant of adult and hetero-sex. The overarching idea was that *everybody knew* children should not know about sex as reproduction. The *effects of power generated* by what participants said about children produced specific knowledge of childhood, particularly about age and vulnerability. Sex/sexuality was talked about as adult-knowledge – partially shared with, and partially hidden from, children.

A significant thread throughout a number of participants talk was a concern for who talked to their children (preferably parents) and how children were informed about sex and sexuality. For Sammie, it was the experience of not having control over what her son accessed on the internet; for Toni, it was knowing that she could not stop children talking at school in the playground about "every detail from French kissing, to having sex"; and for Jayne, it was the example of her sister talking about "where poos come from". These mothers were aware that they could not regulate what others might say in front of their children.

The talk analysed in this chapter highlights a paucity of available spaces for adults to speak about their knowledge of sexual reproduction in children's

lives, apart from a context for parents, such as the NZ Police programme, *Keeping ourselves safe*, within primary schools. As this analysis has indicated, adults' knowledge about informing children is constructed within their own family and cultural histories. These are gendered histories that reiterate the innocence discourse, in which age (appropriate for knowing about sex) is presented as a developmentally deterministic truth. Chapter 8 explores another facet of relational sexuality knowledge that adults keep hidden from children. I now explore discourses involved with claims that children should not know about sex as pleasure.

Chapter 8

Policing the child's knowledge of pleasure in sexuality

This chapter further develops Foucault's power/knowledge analysis of participants' talk. It follows on from the specific focus in Chapter 7 on reproductive sexuality and the strategies by which adults construct childhood innocence within developmental and nature discourses. The focus in this chapter shifts from reproductive knowledge to knowledge of/about sexual pleasure. This is a contested area for research and researcher, where colliding notions of childhood and sexuality sit uncomfortably with cultural and societal discourses about sexuality as the domain of adult experience and about childhood innocence. Historical discourses (see Chapters 3 and 4) continue to define the binary of adult and child, constructing knowledges of adult-knowing and child-ignorance. These discourses also potentially attach stigma through notions of child abuse, and erroneous linkages within popular media of sexual abuse and homosexuality (see Prologue).

Foucault's ideas on desire and pleasure, while predominantly focussed on (male) adult sexuality, can offer a significant lens through which to examine participants' language regarding notions of sexual pleasure in the lives of children. To adopt Foucault's (1978/1990) aim, "The object, in short, is to define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world" (p. 11). Through the ideas and constructions

that adult participants share in their talk, I deconstruct notions of sexual pleasure in childhood.

8.1 Truth regimes of (sexual) health and hygiene:

Constructing normative childhood sexuality

This chapter presents a perspective of problematising pleasurable actions, such as kissing and masturbation, as a normalised adult or at least adolescent (i.e., non-child) behaviour, before examining how boundaries of the child's sexual activity, particularly bodily pleasure, are policed between private and public contexts. The focus for analysis in this chapter are fragments of text from six participants (Sammie, Jayne, Val, Chris, Maxine and Bailey; two parents, two teachers and two therapists). Their responses include replies to five of the six vignettes and range from a focus on hygiene, the relabelling of masturbation as self-soothing, to how to define child nudity. In the first section Sammie (a parent) and Val (a teacher) employ language located in medical discourse, constructing kissing and masturbation as health issues, thereby hiding any notion of physical or emotional sexual pleasure for the child.

Parent view: Hygiene and health as sexual education

Sammie, introduced in Chapters 6 and 7, responded here to a vignette about kissing between two 8-year-old children (Vignette #2) by focusing on notions of hygiene to locate the objectification and regulation of kissing between children.

Sammie: ... gosh this makes you think, doesn't it? [Pauses]... When they teach so much about hygiene, maybe they could – would come at it from an angle of the hygiene? 'That's not a hygienic thing to be

doing.' But then again – why not? Because then you're portraying your adult perception onto the child, onto the children aren't you? So if they've been innocent and experiencing you know, fondness for someone and wanting to share that because they've seen that elsewhere, then ... Yeah, maybe if they could guide them into ways that they could express that ...

Sammie discussed how school staff might respond, locating the inappropriateness of kissing at school within a discursive practice of hygiene education. “That’s not a hygienic thing to be doing” presupposes some ideas for Sammie about what might be unhygienic about kissing. She considered that this response would support the children’s experience of fondness for each other “if they’ve been innocent”. Unsaid, in this response, was some thinking about the previously mentioned question of whether the action indicated “sexual feelings”. To Sammie, fondness and a child’s experiencing of fondness in kissing a[n opposite sex] peer avoided naming the experience as heteronormatively pleasurable. Approaching children with a concern about hygiene made this scenario ‘more acceptable’ to her. The effects of a hygiene discourse can be seen in how she positioned teachers, and how they might respond to the events reflected in this scenario. Hygiene was positioned by Sammie as a dominant discourse within this story, and as a discursive practice of power used to hide sexuality. It is as though kissing cannot be viewed as a potentially sexual action at all in Sammie’s response.

Childhood innocence discourses make use of ‘hygiene’ to police ideas and experience of pleasure in kissing while producing power/knowledge of heteronormative sexuality. It is not that hygiene and sexuality cannot together be

spoken into this story, but the language attempts to silence sexuality and pleasure.

Later, Sammie considered sexuality education in relation to this vignette.

Sammie: ...That [hygiene reason] would be acceptable in a school environment, because the school wouldn't want to encourage, I wouldn't have thought, parents wouldn't have wanted them to be encouraging that sort of behaviour. Yeah. I don't think at aged eight, certainly they don't teach it in school until they're sort of nine - ten, and so you wouldn't want them ... Or even it's later than that isn't it?

Researcher: Teach what?

Sammie: Teach sexual education.

Sammie stated clearly that as a parent, “parents wouldn’t have wanted them to be encouraging that sort of behaviour”. Curiosity invited what ideas might be behind what she meant by “that sort of behaviour”, and an assumption could be that she meant ‘kissing’, but did it mean only kissing? Sammie then segued into thinking about “sexual education”, an interesting phrase, given that within school settings this is usually referred to as sex or sexuality education. Sammie reflected, “certainly they don't teach it in school until they're sort of nine - ten”. Her use of “it” was ambiguous, and required clarification. By using “it” to describe “sexual education”, the language displays an idea that the possibility of children being sexual (sexualised) is difficult to name, it is transgressive. Might she have ideas of children being sexual or having sex? It is unclear in this passage of text. The teaching of sexuality education in the New Zealand curriculum is situated within health and physical education, and particularly about relationships, knowledge, and understanding (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Sammie continued to think about issues of timing related to access to “sexual education” and acquiring sex/sexuality knowledge.

Sammie: Or is it even later? Is it at Intermediate? I actually don't know.

Yeah, there's the hygiene thing and also the puberty... Some of that, yeah. So it's quite appropriate really, because we've had this – I've had this discussion [with my husband] about what – how much do we discuss with a 9-year-old [son], who's then potentially going to tell the 7-year-old [brother]. So how much do you tell them?

Yeah, so definitely the hygiene aspect. That would be an appropriate way to deal with that.

Sammie expressed some uncertainty here about what aspects of sexuality education are covered at what levels of schooling. The Ministry of Education (MoE) policy guidelines are clear about questioning and discussing gender and diversity in the first three years of schooling (ages five to seven), with pubertal change of physical growth and development taught in the following three years (ages eight to ten), including sexual reproduction (see Appendix E). The Intermediate years (ages eleven to twelve) include “Intimate relationships and sexual attraction” and “respect in friendships and relationships” (MoE, n.d.).

Sammie reflected further about the vignette of Deirdre and Frank kissing (Vignette #2), and about her own parenting of her children with her partner, their father, including a discussion with him about “what [and] how much do we discuss”. She considered “there's the hygiene thing and also the puberty”. For Sammie, “the hygiene aspect” offered “an appropriate way to deal with that”. Here “an appropriate way” can be read to mean avoiding reference to sexuality or information about pleasure, and therefore safe for parents who do not want their

children having power/knowledge information about kissing as bodily sexual pleasure. Seen in this way, the discursive role of hygiene becomes a strategy of biopower (Foucault, 1975/1977) and a regulatory discourse deployed to silencing the possibility of thinking about sexuality and pleasure for children (Egan & Hawkes, 2010a; Foucault, 1978/1990). Following on comments originally by Britzman, Robinson (2013) theorised that sharing the ‘difficult knowledge’ of sexuality with children by adults, produces children’s sexual knowledge as subjugated knowledge (see also Foucault, 1980). The discourse produces social and cultural difficulty when discussing kissing as sex/sexuality; and therefore sexual knowledge is closed down and made secret. For Sammie, the focus on kissing becomes limited to teaching children about hygiene. There is no opening to examine other possibilities all about what kissing might mean for children, such as an experience of sexuality and (sexual) pleasure.

Sammie also responded strongly to the vignette about Jacqui rubbing herself between her legs (Vignette #4). In Chapter 5 this vignette was noted for its euphemistic expression. However, the vignette and participant responses included here indicate that the vignette worked; it provided a space for participants to respond to this as referring to genital touch. Their words, whether they used descriptive or euphemistic language, offered useful material for analysis to contribute to understanding the discursive practices around masturbation. Her talk, however, was consistent with the hygiene theme that she had spoken earlier in respect to the other vignette (#2). That hygiene same theme was assigned to this vignette, and this too, became a question posed as a health issue. The medicalised language Sammie used produced a power effect of hiding possibilities for a child’s sexual experience or experiencing pleasure. As Sammie openly stated:

Has she got something medical going on? As a parent, I would follow that up from a medical perspective. Is she – you know, is there a discharge there, is there some sort of infection, is it thrush – something like that? And so I would want to get that checked out. If that came up with nothing then you'd have to start asking why, why she was doing that.

In this brief statement, 'hygiene' became medicalised, linked to the possible presence of a vaginal infection. I questioned further what ideas might sit within or behind this aspect of the discourse.

Sammie: Well you'd want to rule out whether, whether it was itchy – so you'd want to rule that out.

Sammie's language positioned her within medical discourse where ideas of hygiene and health are privileged over possible ideas of sexuality and pleasure, rather than coexisting in the discourse she spoke. Robinson (2013) echoes Foucault's (1978/1990) history about "The child's wellbeing...linked to the health of the nation and the construction of the good normative citizen-subject" (Robinson, 2013, p. 48). Sammie's language links to Robinson; children are under surveillance in the regulation of normal childhood and normal sexuality. I was unclear whether Sammie's words indicated that she aimed to hide sexuality, but then she questioned whether there could be "interference" in Jacqui's (the girl's) experience.

Sammie: [W]hy she was doing that. You know, was it painful? Was this something that was painful? And if so, then that would lead you to – lead you to question why it was painful. So in my mind

immediately [pause] Isn't that interesting? My mind immediately goes to, 'Is there something happening that I'm not aware of?'

Researcher: Such as?

Sammie: Some sort of interference, by someone [pause] it's not normal

Researcher: In the range of possibilities, what's not normal?

Sammie: I'm thinking about girls, it's not normal for them to go around itching themselves. Well no, is it itching? No?

Researcher: Rubbing.

Sammie: Rubbing. I can't think of any girls that I know of, at that age [eight years], who would do that.

Sammie appeared to have made an assumption that the girl Jacqui had an infection because the action was “not normal for [girls] to go around itching themselves”. Her question of whether there might be “some sort of interference, by someone” opened the possibility of sexuality – but only in terms of what is considered normal. In this case, “it's not normal” she stated. This speaking positioned Sammie as one of Foucault's (1975/1977) “judges of normality” (p. 304), she is a ‘parent-judge’. Sammie explored the notion of what connects to ideas of not normal sex/sexuality for Jacqui, linking this to abuse “by someone”. Therefore, her wondering emerged about abnormal sexuality, and potentially sexuality related to abuse. As indicated in Chapter 4, assumptions of abuse, as a response to panics, have developed within child protection discourse (C. Davies, 2012; Robinson, 2013). Assumed within the ideas of child innocence and ignorance is the notion that a child could not initiate touching or rubbing their genitals or the genitals of other children for pleasurable purposes. Yet, within medical and psychological research on childhood masturbation (as discussed in

Chapter 4), occurrences of ‘autoeroticism’ are recorded as not uncommon in infancy and childhood. In Sammie’s thinking, a continuum gradually appeared of perceived possibilities to explain this abnormal action: firstly, a medical condition; secondly, a symptom of abnormal sexual experience that in Ellis’ (1913) language is ‘self-abuse’. This experience constituted abuse.

Sammie: So then I would be questioning why that was happening.

Researcher: So the first one is to check the medical or itchy question and then if it's painful, then you know why, and wondering if there's something there.

Sammie: Yeah. But you would also be wanting to know, like, her reason for doing it, you'd want to try to determine that.

Researcher: How would you do that?

Sammie: 'Cause at that age - they wouldn't have sexual feelings – they wouldn't do that for enjoyment would they? At that age? [Pauses]
I don't think – I don't know, I wouldn't have expected that.

Sammie’s comment, “At that age - they wouldn’t have sexual feelings”, was quickly followed by, “they wouldn’t do that for enjoyment would they?” Here Sammie seems unable to comprehend that pleasure from genital manipulation is possible for girls at age five. It is likely that her thinking is influenced by childhood discourses that shape the child as innocent and sexually ignorant. What is problematic if a child experiences genital and bodily enjoyment or pleasure for themselves? There are the historical religious and medical concerns about a child’s spiritual and physical health (noted in Chapter 4), which are policed through practices of social and parental regulation of childhood. The concept of sexual pleasure for children does continue to seem problematic to adults, and is

largely linked to panics (see Foucault, 1980c) about the possibility of inappropriate sharing of information or abuse. However, children do independently experience pleasure from 'autoeroticism' (see Bancroft, 2003; Money, 1986). According to Elias and Gebhard (1969), acceptability of masturbation, along with nudity, varies within families depending on class, and that over half of boys and about a third of girls experience masturbation. If a child masturbates, it is most likely, then, that they experience 'sexual feelings' 'at that age'. Sammie's expectation fits within a discourse on childhood ignorance and innocence leading me to check whether she was asking a question or making a statement. She said it was a question. I further wanted to explore what Sammie thought about the idea of the girl Jacqui's possible enjoyment from her rubbing herself in an action that might be masturbatory.

Sammie: Some pleasure – yeah. And so how do you do that? You'd ask the child directly, 'What is it that you, why do you do that?' You know, 'Is it itchy? Is it sore? Is there something there? What can you feel?'

Sammie's questions explore her own reflections about understanding what was possible here. However, Sammie was bound by the effects of discourses about hygiene and sexual ignorance. Did Sammie think this way because the child is a girl? Would her ideas be different if the child was a boy? Anecdotal evidence (see Val's narrative below) and research from observational studies (e.g., Sandfort & Cohen-Kettenis, 2000) suggests that adults think boys are likely to touch their genitals more than are girls. Boys' handling of their penises is normalised by many adults possibly because the penis has more than one bodily function, both urinary and sexual functions.

Researcher: If we were talking about a boy, would there be something different in your response?

Sammie: No, I think it'd still be the same thing, why are they doing that? So, is there something wrong? You know, is there something medically – is it itchy, is there an infection, is there something there? And then again, same thing, if it's painful then why is that? So I'd want to get that medically checked out before then [pause] I don't think I'd immediately jump to a conclusion there was something untoward going on. But then if medically that was proved not to be the case, then you would – I would then think, 'Okay, why is that happening?'

Aware of how gendered positions are related to responses to children's genital touching, I persisted in asking Sammie her understanding about what difference there might be for a boy.

Sammie: Yeah. I mean, 'Why do you do that?' Are they aware that they're doing that? 'Cause quite often kids, you know, might be doing something and they're not even aware that they're [doing something]

Sammie's language evoked power/knowledge about childhood innocence and ignorance. At that moment her language seemed to minimise and deny ideas of pleasure for children from genital touching, hiding any possibility of awareness even of the potential of children's experience and (sexual) knowledge/awareness of what they were doing. I then questioned her about whether this action might have some different experience for a child. I also questioned my own position; whether I became parent-educator rather than researcher.

Researcher: Right. My understanding is boys and girls can find some comfort in rubbing themselves.

Sammie: Oh really? At that young age?

Researcher: Yeah. But it's not a comfort that we might think of from an adult perspective, but that there is still some pleasure there.

Here I positioned myself within a discourse that separated sexual knowledge and pleasure between knowing-adults and unknowing children, by introducing the concept that comfort/pleasure might be an experience for the child. My speaking involved 'difficult knowledge' (Robinson, 2013), euphemistically describing "some comfort" for children that differs from "comfort that we might think of from an adult perspective".

Gendered positionings, as female participant and male researcher, may have contributed to the discursive position spoken in these words, where a tension of care and caution (see Flanagan, 2015), and a researcher-position of inquirer not informant, held me from naming and asking directly about masturbation.

Sammie: Oh okay. See I wouldn't have thought that.

Researcher: So again, in terms of Jacqui's situation we don't know, but it's the ...

Sammie: I would be asking the med[ical], I would be asking questions. You know, friends who are doctors, nurses, whatever. [I've] got a friend who's a doctor in sexual health so that would be someone I would [ask?] You know, 'Is that normal?' Yeah.

Sammie's focus on checking out this information was interesting. An effect of this interview allowed Sammie to consider and pursue her uncertainty by searching for certainty with medical or health professionals/friends. As a parent, she would ask

about this action, asking “Is that normal?” Sammie positions health knowledge, specifically medical knowledge, as knowing what is normal, what is the truth. Her intention to check this knowledge out with “friends who are doctors, nurses” draws on and reinforces the idea that science in health and medicine can provide truthful answers to questions of childhood sex/sexuality. Through this action of asking of others, Sammie de-prioritises her own experience and her woman’s knowledge in favour of medical and health ‘experts’. This talk produces a medicalisation of pleasure within the medicalisation of sex discourse in which sexuality is studied scientifically. Foucault (1978/1990) recognises the medicalisation of sex as “a completely new technology of sex” (p. 116) which developed into a sexual psychopathology and into the realm of psychiatry (Foucault, 2016). Within medical discourse, children’s sex and masturbation became abnormal, and a site for the control of the dangerous sexuality of children (Foucault, 1979/1988; also see Chapter 4). Meanwhile, the expertise that Sammie had developed, having been ‘a girl’, was not available or used successfully by her. This restricted knowledge was different for Val, the therapist in the next section.

Therapist view: ‘Safe’ self-soothing or ‘enjoyable’ masturbation?

Val, a therapist, in her response to the story about Jacqui rubbing herself between her legs (Vignette #4), questioned the language that adults might use to describe this action.

Val: ...my head automatically went to masturbating, and that’s because I’ve seen children masturbate at school. I think, I mean, language is interesting. I think that the other thing ... was the idea about Mum or Dad, or whoever, having a conversation with Jacqui about

masturbating, and you know, that will be influenced by their beliefs about whether that's acceptable or not. And then, hearing [colleague] talk about self-soothing, and thinking, well, that's probably the same thing, but self-soothing is much more tolerable as far as language goes for some people. It gives it a different meaning. When I think of self-soothing I think, okay, you touch it and it feels nice – which isn't particularly different from masturbating, I don't think.

Researcher: The connotation [being]?

Val: The language around it, it's, yeah, it's more age appropriate I guess, and it's more, it's easier for adults to hear that, perhaps, than perhaps a word like masturbating.

Researcher: Because masturbation has a different sort of contextual meaning?

Val: It does, it's sexual.

Researcher: When you're pubertal or post-pubertal?

Val: Yeah, it does. And there's something about the difference between self-soothing which you can kind of suck your thumb and the gratification, I suppose, that we expect will come with masturbating.

Val's reflection on the word 'masturbation' as holding a sexual meaning, compared with a colleague's use of "self-soothing" as "much more tolerable as far as language goes for some people", highlights how language produces meaning within contexts, and produces power relations in terms of contrasting childhood and adulthood, and constructing sexuality as an adult/non-child domain. The euphemistic language of the vignette describes Jacqui using one hand to rub

herself between her legs. For Val, however, masturbation and self-soothing are “probably the same thing”, but there is some contradictory explanation, which is also clarifying. “It gives it a different meaning”. For Val, these descriptions produce a difference in relation to adult’s beliefs (about childhood?) and their tolerance (for child sexuality?). She considers one is “more age appropriate”, and this reproduces the frequently used cliché in which truths of childhood are delineated by age. And yet, Val considered that ‘self-soothing’, as touching and feeling that is ‘nice’, “isn’t particularly different from masturbating”. Val identified that Jacqui’s rubbing of herself, even if described as “self-soothing”, as “masturbation”; an action that is a sexual action and can include a sexual meaning.

Val’s talk identifies a distinction between the effects of language. To use a euphemism such as ‘self-soothing’ connects with notions of pleasure in thumb-sucking, and of childhood as ignorant and innocent of sexual pleasure. To suggest that a child may experience sexual pleasure from self-soothing might extend the action and experience beyond what is acceptable to adults who believe in childhood innocence. Masturbation is not an acceptable word to use for many people, suggested Val, since the language starkly refers to sexual pleasure. The use of euphemisms in this context not only subjugates ideas of sexual pleasure but engages in a discursive practice to silence speaking of masturbation in childhood. A child’s bodily experience is not responded to, thereby keeping the secret knowledge of pleasure intact as adult experience. The use of an oblique and inoffensive description (self-soothing) has effects of hiding the possibility of pleasure. The contrast of pleasure, as potentially initiated by a child as an intentional act for pleasure, cannot find space for meaning in this talk, because it

is unacceptable. The 'go to' language is 'self-soothing'. Masturbation was explored in Chapter 3, and children's masturbation was examined in Chapter 4, particularly highlighting historical and cultural meanings, and implications for parents and those involved in childrearing to control and discipline child behaviour.

I followed up Val's remark about seeing children masturbate at school and her phrase, "language is interesting".

Researcher: You mention that you have seen children masturbate at school, can you say a bit more about that context and what happened for them in that context?

Val: Well, nothing. Everybody pretty much ignored it. You know, it was just something that this person did at school. She was 11 or 12. I don't know whether anything happened, you know, that I'm unaware of, but certainly nothing happened that I was aware of [pause] This was a friend of mine, as a child [she] certainly wasn't marginalised or excluded. It was just kind of what she did.

Val's story of a young girl masturbating at school was a recollection of her own childhood friend's action at school. She had now produced some knowledge from her own childhood and Val called on this form of expertise. Unaware of any specific actions by adults, or attempts at behavioural interventions on her friend, Val did remember that her friend "certainly wasn't marginalised or excluded. It was just kind of what she did".

Here again, silence by adults is used discursively to produce power/knowledge on masturbation. Through ignoring an action, childhood discourse about ignorance and innocence was sustained by other children.

Assuming children do not experience sexual pleasure, there is no need to comment or act. Also, silence is maintained when there is no room to speak about these things: “Everybody pretty much ignored it”. Such inaction relates to Foucault’s (1978/1990) idea that “the sexuality of children has been subordinated and their ‘solitary habits’ interfered with” (p. 41). While Foucault refers to masturbation by males, his words are relevant, considering the actions inflicted on girls during the moral hygiene movements of the 1880s (Egan & Hawkes, 2007, 2008; Sprague, 1990). Foucault (1978/1990) found:

Educators and doctors combatted children’s onanism like an epidemic that needed to be eradicated. What this actually entailed, throughout this whole secular campaign that mobilized the adult world around the sex of children, was using these tenuous pleasures as a prop, constituting them as secrets (that is, forcing them into hiding so as to make possible their discovery)... (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 42)

Val’s memory reveals complexities of language and the private/public context of where these kinds of actions occur. She spoke of Jacqui’s action as masturbation, in which the child ‘rubbed herself between her legs’ within a public context of school, both in class and outside as the class were lining up. This word, masturbation, is in contrast to the phrase, self-soothing, which is described as more acceptable language. Self-soothing might also be seen as more acceptable within the public context of the school. Val’s story of her friend names the appropriate response in the school context is to ignore this action when it happens.

The relations of power within the language of self-soothing and masturbation, and within ignoring (or not) the action of masturbation, are produced within the naming of the behaviour and in whether the behaviour is

ignored or responded to. These practices of speech and action in response to Jacqui's 'rubbing of herself between her legs' (ignoring the behaviour is also a responsive act), locate knowledge/power in the language that describes what is happening and in the responsive action of overlooking or responding to Jacqui's behaviour. For Val, Jacqui's private act within a public place transgresses behavioural social norms. Most children, it is assumed, have knowledge that masturbation should be hidden in secret privacy, and not, like Jacqui and Val's friend, discoverable or performed in public.

While the vignette does not speak of masturbation, or clearly state touching in the crotch area, it did produce talk that included this focus and understanding. However, within this talk, ideas of pleasure were absent. It seemed that genital touching held only other meanings, and there was no talk about any comprehension or space to safely speak about sexual pleasure for a child. I now explore further the relations of power around public/private spaces and how adult language and interventions are used to police the boundaries between these spaces. These accounts come from the participants who share some of their own personal stories in response to the vignettes, and describe actions of children that surfaced in relation to specific vignettes. What emerges is an awareness that specific actions of children performed in a private context, although viewed as potentially sexual and enjoyable (pleasurable), are also perceived as potentially socially unacceptable but not harmful. However, a tension exists here. If these actions were performed in public, they would be seen as socially transgressive and against the cultural norm.

8.2 Policing boundaries of pleasure between private/public actions

This section explores possibilities of comments about pleasure in response to specific vignettes where this could be an expected theme. The following responses from two parents, two teachers and a therapist relate to vignettes that tell about Deirdre kissing Frank (both aged 8 years, Vignette #2), Oliver (aged 5) who pulls down his pants in class (Vignette #3) and about Quentin (aged 9) who touches another boy's penis in the toilet (Vignette #5). These vignettes triggered talk around nudity and sexual exploration.

Teacher view: The role of policy in schools to police child sexuality

Chris, a father of a young child, was a qualified beginning teacher within the first two years of professional teaching. He responded to the story of two eight-year-old children in Vignette #2, where Deirdre kisses Frank.

Chris: My thinking about what's happening is that she's just exploring, possibly, what she's seen her parents do, or another adult. Or she's exploring what she'd seen on television... I'd say it's pretty unlikely that she's doing it purely out of her own curiosity. Like, my thing is that she's seen something somewhere, and she's trying it out.

Researcher: So, trying it out?

Chris: Yeah. There could possibly be an attraction to Frank, and she's acting on the attraction. You know, she's, and she's thinking, like, a way to bond with Frank is to kiss him. That's definitely probable

enough as an 8-year-old. In terms of my response, yeah, I guess I'd ask what the school policy is on it. Like, if the school policy is that they're allowed to kiss, then I'd just have to go with that. I wouldn't, you know, if I saw them – If they were, say, relatives of mine, out in a park environment and it wasn't in a school, I, I probably wouldn't tell them not to do it.

Researcher: How come?

Chris: Well, it's, its – to me, it's a kiss and it's a nice form of interacting with someone.

Chris' talk was included here because of contradictory and confused ideas that were presented. Chris talked of exploration, but not curiosity. He viewed Deirdre's kiss as exploratory, likely resulting from having seen others kiss. Chris then talked about attraction and school policy before introducing a notion of pleasure: "to me, it's a kiss and it's a nice form of interacting with someone". It seemed, to Chris, that the public space of the school community does not allow for children to kiss, yet the public space of a wider community, in the park environment, might be more acceptable to him. To check with Chris about his sense of whether Deirdre and Frank's kissing was a problem, he was asked:

Researcher: So you don't see anything problematic with it just on its own?

Chris: No, I don't. If Frank didn't like it then I'd talk to Deirdre and say, "Can you see that Frank doesn't enjoy that?" Like, if Frank's kind of, like, oh, it's nice attention [pause]. You know, they're eight years old, they're not [pause]. I don't see a problem with it, but I think inevitably in a school environment, and possibly this school, that there would be some sort of – I don't know if there's any –

written protocol. But there'd be something about it not being acceptable. I'd probably say, yeah, it's nice to bond with our friends, but we just can't be kissing. You know, that would possibly be a school response.

Chris returned to the idea of school policy about children kissing, and said that, "inevitably in a school environment, and possibly this school, that there would be some sort of...written protocol". While he did not view this scenario as problematic, except if Frank did not enjoy the kiss, Chris did make an assumption that "there'd be something about it not being acceptable" in "this school". "This school" was North School, located in a higher socio-economic community and where there was a high parental involvement and interaction with teachers. An opportunity was missed by not asking Chris about whether there might be any difference if the vignette was about a boy kissing a girl. Earlier in this chapter, Sammie also reflected that parents at the same school would not want to encourage kissing at school. As a form of compliance with "this school" environment, disciplined in the Foucauldian sense within school discourse, Chris said of children that, "we just can't be kissing".

Researcher: And if they said, "why not?"

Chris: If they said, "why not?" I'd say, "because sometimes other people see you kissing and think it's something different". I don't know, that's probably what I'd say. Like, people sometimes take kissing the wrong ways. It's a very special thing between two people and we just need to be really careful about when we're kissing and save it for a special time and a special place.

The pleasure of kissing as “a way to bond” and “a nice form of interacting” shifted in this section of transcript and became something that people “think it’s something different” and “people sometimes take kissing the wrong way”. A suggestion of privacy is reinforced particularly in the words, “It’s a very special thing between two people and we just need to be really careful about when we’re kissing”. In this text, pleasure is policed in two ways: through the governance of a school policy or position assuming that kissing is unacceptable, and through the discipline of the body in the statement that hides the possibility of public affection and to “save it for a special time and a special place”. Through speaking these words, Chris was positioned within multiple discourses that shaped his speaking and he continued to shape these discourses. His words both produced and were produced by discourse. Effects of power relations were heard in his speaking about “this school” and his own thinking about two children kissing in school, and in public and private spaces. Chris was asked about his words, “people sometimes take kissing the wrong ways”.

Researcher: So, in terms of taking the idea the wrong way – how do you think people might take it?

Chris: Well, I think every child has different levels of maturity and understanding and different kids are exposed to different things. So, I guess, from a sexual point of view, there’s older kids at this school that would possibly see that – and play on it, and make fun of it, and it could become a problem in that way, you know. Like, and it was never that, it was just [pause], and it could [pause], she could very well be [pause]. There’s every chance that she, she has seen [pause]. I doubt she would have had some sort of sexual

awakening or anything like that, but she might [pause]. An 8-year-old kid, I don't know [pause]. Yeah, it could be sexual, but I'd say, in my opinion, it's highly unlikely. It's just a form of affection, it's just kissing. But the problem in school that might be, that older children that are more familiar with what kissing leads to is, is, is a prerequisite to sex, like. And that's what it's often portrayed as in the media. Like, kissing, kissing is a – when you kiss, it leads to this, and leads to that, and that and that. That's what all the kissing's for [in the media?].

Developmental discourses featured strongly in Chris' words about levels of maturity and understanding. Through his transcript, there was a tension within Chris' speaking about kissing “from a sexual point of view” and “it's just a form of affection”. However, that form of affection was viewed, according to Chris, by “older children more familiar with what kissing leads to is, is, is a prerequisite to sex, like”. Older children, in this school, were likely to be no more than ten or eleven years old. Pleasure in kissing became fraught in this tension. Therefore a teacher is forced within discourse and discursive practice to police acts of kissing as a way to deny a child's sexual knowledge of pleasure.

Parent view: Children's (sexual) pleasure in nudity

Sammie, a mother of two boys responding to the story of Oliver pulling down his pants in class (Vignette #3), suggested that Oliver's behaviour, through this action, could result in him being seen as the class clown. A class clown is a child who entertains their classmates and teachers (L. Wilson, 2016), and usually “experience[s] positive emotions at school”, but their “behaviour [is] related to

less positive classroom behaviour” (Platt, Wagner & Ruch, 2016, p. 327).

Sammie recalled a story about her own son.

Sammie: Class clown. Yeah, my 9-year-old does that and so the four year old [son] copies. And I tell him that it's not appropriate. So I can imagine that that would be – I can totally picture that.

Researcher: So what does your 9-year-old do?

Sammie: Oh – he's always – not always, he thinks it's really funny to pull his pants down and do little dances and things.

While Sammie explained that her son's dancing naked was not appropriate, there was a sense of fun and pleasure in her telling of this story. Clowns invite laughter by being inappropriate – it is a knowledgeable inappropriateness. What Sammie's son does is linked to her appreciation, and pleasure, in his behaviour. In describing her son's unclothed body within their home, a site of privacy from public space, her son 'publicly' and freely displays his naked body in front of his brother and mother.

Sammie: He's never seen it happen from any of us. [Laughter] But he thinks it's hilarious. And so the 4-year-old copies. So if [Oliver] the 5-year-old came to school and thought that was really funny – and everyone would laugh. Kids would all laugh, so they like that don't they? If they get a response.

Sammie's response to the vignette of Oliver's public display of pulling his pants down is contextualised in relation to her sons' private/public display at home.

There is something there about normalcy being both sustained and subverted. In a private context of home and family, Sammie's son's public behaviour is funny, and while deemed not appropriate, it is accepted. In a public context of school,

Oliver's public behaviour is also funny, but not appropriate and not accepted.

Aware of this distinction, I ask Sammie further about how she responds to her son.

Sammie: I tell him it's not appropriate – he's nine, and that's not appropriate. You don't see other people dancing around with no clothes on. So no, that's not appropriate. And the 4-year-old is copying, so he should be setting a good example.

Sammie's talk includes three positioning statements. She claims that her son's actions are not appropriate. Appropriateness surfaces frequently in participants' perceptions of children's actions and words. Firstly, Sammie identifies her son's action as not appropriate because of age; secondly, because it is not socially acceptable, "you don't see other people dancing around with no clothes on"; and thirdly, because his younger brother copies him, and "he should be setting a good example". I checked with Sammie about the context in which her son performed in this way.

Researcher: I guess he's choosing his context where he might do that.

Sammie: Yeah, it's at home. It might be after he's had a bath. Or shower, or something. He comes in or ... I'm trying to think where else he might do it – oh, he's just being silly, you know. Maybe they're all ready for bed, and he'll come in and sing a silly song. Yeah.

The context for Sammie's son dancing naked in front of his mother and 4-year-old brother is in a family setting, at home. It is a private space. It is an environment in which pleasure can be experienced in the performance of an inappropriate and illicit action – illicit, in that this kind of action would not be acceptable outside the privacy of the home space, as it transgresses social and cultural expectations.

Sammie: It's always in a jokey, kind of, 'ha, ha, ha,' sort of manner.

Researcher: And so with Oliver, you see that as a class clown kind of thing?

Sammie: Yeah, my initial reaction is, yeah – a bit of fun, 'I'll get a laugh here.' 5-year-old – would they know that that was inappropriate? They should do.

There are a number of assumptions to explore here: family 'culture', what 'clowning' might mean – especially as a gendered clown! There is also the explicit idea that this action, for both Sammie's son and for Oliver is inappropriate. Yet, this naked dancing is enjoyable, although "inappropriate", to these three people: to mother and her two sons. Elias and Gebhard (1969) note that nudity is allowed more for boys and for children "in the upper-class home" (p. 405) in Western societies, a connection that can possibly be made with this family in the higher socio-economic community of North School. There was pleasure in the display as Sammie laughed; pleasure for her 9-year-old son as "he thinks it's hilarious", and did this dance in a fun, joking and silly way; and pleasure for the 4-year-old son. It could also be asked what kind of physical pleasure might the boy experience in being naked and moving as he was? In what ways can naked play and dance be described as sexual? But naked play and dance, as Frayser (2003) describes of many actions, can be construed as sexual. Discursive practices within gender and class possibly inform ideas of how Sammie might make sense of her son's actions in the way that Gesell and Ilg (1946) describe as 'suggestion' and 'direction', "to preserve easy, mutual confidence between mother and child" (p. 316). In a study of the childhood body within the context of early childhood education in Japan and New Zealand, R.S. Burke (2013) comments on the normalisation of the clothed body, and panic about

naked bodies, in the New Zealand early childhood setting. R.S. Burke considers the history of the Christchurch Crèche case and Peter Ellis (see my comment in the Prologue) as contributing to a current sense of protecting children's bodies that are under surveillance. Further, then, are intersections of discursive practices connected to culture and abuse. It may be possible that these settings of gender, class, culture and abuse are not current in Sammie's thinking and responding to her son's actions, however the nature of discourse produces a potential for questions about these. The distinction between private and public determines the sense of propriety and safety while the sense of everything 'being normal' within the display of silliness is sustained.

Teacher view: Children's experience of (sexual) pleasure

Jayne, an experienced teacher introduced in Chapter 6, responded to the vignette about Quentin touching another boy's penis (Vignette #5) in the school toilet.

Jayne: So I just would have thought [at] 9, your body is definitely starting to change, maybe your hormones are starting to kick in a little bit. I think he would have known [that] this isn't a way that we would generally behave at school. When you think he would have been at school for a good 4 years.

Jayne called upon a range of discursive ideas within these words. Reasoning within the biological discourse, that "hormones are starting to kick in", she commented on Quentin's knowledge about expected behaviour at school, especially since he had been at school for four years. She identified that by age nine, boys have a sense of pubertal development, making them aware that modesty is required in social contexts. This idea about hormones is a further

thread of medical and scientific discourse within talk about nature and biology, of young males changing bodies, and assumptions of what is meant by hormones “kicking in”, that is, a developing interest in sex. There was also the social culture at school, in which children were trained to perform practices to support them fitting into the social context, that is, *ways* “we would generally behave at school”. What was not spoken about here was a commonly held view that pubertal development often brings a greater curiosity about others and their bodies. Considering ‘general behaviour’ at school, there might be an allowance for behaviour that sometimes happens, for example, based on ‘hormones kicking in’? This vignette also offered Jayne a place to explore the clash of private and public spaces. The toilet can be viewed as both public and private, and activity in the toilet may be either or both public (shared) and private (individual).

Jayne responded to the piece of the vignette that described the school as a rural school, and identified particular cultural knowledge/power regarding life in a rural context.

Jayne: And the rural aspect, I’ve taught in a rural school [there] I had from 5- to 12-year-olds. And I wouldn’t have thought there was any circumstances that children would have thought that was an appropriate way to behave. What had made him think that was ok? ... that would make me think ‘well maybe something’s happened to him in the past’ or is happening now ... If it was curiosity, if he was being silly, if someone else had done it to him and he thought it felt nice you know?

Heard here in Jayne’s words is a rebuttal to ideas that, for those who live in rural areas and might be more aware of sexuality through exposure to animal

behaviour, there was no case for children in rural contexts to be more sexually experiential or active. She also directed her thinking to ideas of whether Quentin (in Vignette #5) may have experienced abuse.

Acknowledgement of pleasure, that “he thought it felt nice”, is an interesting concept amidst the reasoning of modesty, social conventions, biological development, a heightened rural awareness, and abuse. Jayne had an idea that physical genital/sexual touch for a 9-year-old boy could feel nice, opening space for ideas of physical and emotional pleasure. In hindsight, this is where questions could have been asked of Jayne about what she might have wondered about the experience of pleasure for children entering puberty. These could have explored the idea of sexual pleasure and her understandings of what conditions parents place on children around this.

These questions are important because some boys who have been sexually abused have described their experience as physically pleasurable when it involves touch or manipulation of their penis. However, they may experience it as both pleasurable and not pleasurable in the same event. This experiential dissonance occurs as emotional and bodily. Boys have shared in therapy that, as a result of their own abuse experience of pleasure, their touching another boy’s penis was intended to share this pleasurable aspect (see Flanagan, 2010).

Jayne’s reflection on this vignette highlights questions about the kinds of knowing that there may be available culturally for boys about their own bodies, and how boys’ bodies are disciplined by social and cultural discourses on sexuality. In this next section, Bailey reflected on wanting to provide information in response to her son’s direct enquiry about ‘wet dreams’.

Parent view: Wet dreams – telling about sexual pleasure

Bailey is a mother of one boy (aged 11) and three girls (two daughters aged under 9, and a teenage niece). During Bailey's response to the sixth vignette where Stephen tells Lucy about sex, she recounted a story about her son and his enquiry about 'wet dreams', referred to in medical literature as nocturnal emissions (e.g., Ellis, 1913). Bailey had been talking about open and honest responses to children's questions.

Bailey: It's, it's funny 'cause my son asked me not so long ago what a wet dream was, because they'd been doing sex education at school and the teacher had told them about wet dreams. But didn't tell them what a wet dream was. So he's coming to ask me, I was like, "Oh crikey, this is a question you should be asking Dad," you know. And, so I tried to inform him the best I could without telling him too much. I said, "You'll definitely know when one's happened," and I said, "So that will probably make you feel a bit more relaxed," and I said, "It's something about feeling excited, it's a happy, happy thing that boys have," you know. I mean I don't know much about boys and the ages and stages I mean I've got three daughters and one son and a husband so I kind of think that he can ... He knows ages and stages and ... But then I overheard my son and his mate, I was at the toilet - outside my window, they didn't realise I was at the toilet, and they were trying to themselves, trying to presume - and they were presuming it was wees coming out the diddle. So I guess I believe in maybe them knowing - don't know if I wanted him to know exactly what it was and how all that

works, 'cause I don't think he's figured that all out for himself just yet and I think that maybe sometimes things need to - I mean as I said to him, "Once it does happen, you'll know right, that's what that was," but until then ... I don't know - maybe I don't mind him thinking ... I don't know, I don't know and my kids have asked me, you know how are babies made - they're quite happy with the seed in the tummy.

Bailey's talk included ideas of wet dreams as relaxing and exciting for boys, "it's a happy, happy thing that boys have". She wanted to respond to her son's enquiry for information about this area of new knowledge that had been introduced at school. In this way, Bailey joined with other parents who identify their preference for telling their children first about sex and sexuality, but Bailey's response was both restrained and open ("I tried to inform him the best I could without telling him too much").

A number of gendered positions were presented in Bailey's text: that fathers hold some parental responsibility for talking to their sons about wet dreams, that Bailey was trying her best as a female to share information about male sexuality, and possibly that Bailey did not want to assume that she should speak this knowledge to her son when his father could or should. There was some confusion and a sense of not having access to requisite language. Further to this confusion about the level of information to share is a question about Bailey's subjectivity as mother who was asked this question about wet dreams by her Intermediate school-aged son. She said that her son "asked her not so long ago" because "they'd been doing sex education at school". Where is Dad in this conversation about a boy's wet dreams? In her telling that the boy's Dad should

be asked and respond to this question, there is no mention of this eventually happening. It appears that Bailey, as mother, is made responsible for her son's sexuality education by being asked, and by the school teacher's introduction of wet dreams in their teaching. Like the parents' group, and particularly the midwives talk in Chapter 7, many women appear to be front-footing their children's education about sexuality, albeit frequently in the form of 'the correct terminology'. Boys' experience of sexual pleasure continues as a theme in the next section, but moves from Bailey's son's enquiry to his mother towards a father's description to a (female) therapist about his sons' shared sexual experiences.

Therapist view: Finding space to speak about sexual curiosity and exploration

Maxine, a therapist, reflected on children's access to pornography during her response to the story of Deirdre kissing Frank (Vignette #2). She commented on parents' use of technology as a tool for distraction, with children witnessing adult activity online. She questioned whether sexual activity among some children, such as kissing, may be viewed by adults as harmful or dangerous. This opinion was expressed when, particularly, children are involved in potentially curious exploration about sexuality.

Maxine: So they [the children] type in 'sex' on the computer, they get a lot more than what they bargained for. ... I wonder about parents and caregivers using iPads and iPhones and the computer as a way of coping, because it gets the kids out of their hair and then I wonder if there's less supervision...

Researcher: Have you seen an increase...of referrals using technology now?

Maxine: Absolutely. Well, certainly kids being exposed to really full on pornographic images...that they have stumbled across, and it's extensive, in terms of the images they've seen. Not just the bums and boobs that were around when we were kids...

Very soon after, Maxine shared a story about a family she had worked alongside, emphasising what she perceived to be the father's alternative perspectives on his sons' actions.

Maxine: Actually, what comes to mind for me, just around Deirdre and Frank too, is [pause] I'm just thinking of a father's comment. We worked with his two boys, who were ten and twelve. The father's comment of boys of that age that, this was a situation of two sets of boys who were engaging in penetrative anal sex, in the context of it being fairly mutual, and had a strong background of watching pornography together, the four boys [they had] this sleepover, and a little bit of lack of supervision and knowingness from protective, good parents. But it was just kind of interesting while they were taking it incredibly seriously there was also a sense from the Dad that, isn't this kind of normal exploratory, you know, curiosity? As a young fulla himself, and he thinks back to some of the behaviour that he engaged in with mates and he didn't kind of enhance on any of that, but I do kind of wonder sometimes, are we a bit too rigid in our, the rules around what we should be expecting kids to be engaging in. So, each different situation and each context...

The father Maxine is telling about in the interview recalls something of his own learning, through experience “with mates”. It could be with this lens that the father considers his sons’ behaviour is not unusual. He had said, “isn’t this kind of normal exploratory, you know, curiosity?” Considering his own childhood and curious exploration of sexuality, Maxine recounted that “as a young fulla himself, ... he thinks back to some of the behaviour that he engaged in with mates”.

A problematic issue in this story, which adds to adults’ complexity of thinking about children learning about sexuality, are the two activities of watching pornography and of engaging in anal sex. Maxine did not expand on the specifics of this story, and as a male researcher I was not comfortable nor interested in asking a female participant potentially voyeuristic details about this family and the boys’ sexual actions. However, the discursive settings of pornography and non-heteronormative sex do invite some reflection. Theorising sex and sexuality, as discussed in Chapter 3, involves multiple possibilities for meaning, and particularly in relation to the effects of power/knowledge. The production of pornography has largely been shown to satisfy a male commercial market for pleasure, in addition to sex, and the viewing of sex, being a marketable product. Social and cultural responses to the use of pornography and acts of anal sex as filthy or dirty. While the father did not speak of his sons’ experience as pleasurable, it is likely that his own similar experience as a young person evoked understandings of pleasure. Furthermore, there is a contradictory positioning for the father in this example. As a man, possibly being or having been in a heterosexual relationship, talking about his two sons, he spoke about homosexual sex for boys as normal, exploratory and curious. The contradiction of discourses

here, as Foucault (1978/1990) states, “can exist ... within the same strategy; they can... circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy” (p. 102). Sex discourses are produced in this example through power relations on childhood, on children relating sexually, on heteronormativity and challenges to understanding hetero-sex as the gendered norm, and on parents and fathers called to account within a political and social practice that is counselling. There is likely an experience of pleasure in sex for these boys, although unspoken.

It was not in my purpose to determine whether anal sex between males aged 10 and 12 should be regarded as abnormal or abusive. Nor how boys of these ages accessing pornography should be regarded. These questions exist within this research since my purpose was to ethically provide a space for exploring the understandings talked about by participants. However, what and how sexual behaviour is perceived within social contexts as normal or abnormal has effects for where and how this father might speak about his own experience, and the experience of his sons. Geertz’s (1974, 1983) notions of local knowledge, and of doubly listening (see Chapter 5), provide insight into understanding what this father’s experience and speaking holds for this research. There appears to be no space for this father to speak about his questions of curiosity and exploration for himself and his boys until he comes into a counselling context with Maxine.

Maxine’s pondering, “I do kind of wonder sometimes, are we a bit too rigid in our, the rules around what we should be expecting kids to be engaging in” invites going slow with making judgment or decisions about right and wrong. It also questions where men can find spaces to speak safely about their own same-sex experiences as children. A fear or shame for heterosexual men (see

Robinson's (2013) ideas of 'difficult knowledge') may be of being judged and labelled (possibly as gay, homosexual, perverted), and that discursive fear/shame subjugates this knowledge for men. The previous knowledge of this father as a sexual child experiencing pleasure was not spoken about until, and except in, this confessional context (see Foucault, 1978/1990) of therapy, his children's therapy. The therapeutic context constructed for these boys and their father was a social practice of surveillance. It is a policing, not only the boys' knowledge and experience of sex and sexual pleasure, but a policing of actions as children who transgress normative childhood. As children, these boys accessed (adult) pornography and engaged in (adult) sexual activity. Furthermore, this sexual activity crossed the boundaries of age and heteronormativity. The confessional space also acted as a disciplining of parents who are described as 'protective' and 'good', but had a "little bit of lack of supervision".

Chapter summary: Little place for sexual pleasure as a child

This chapter has presented examples of the use of euphemisms ('self-soothing') in speaking about sex and how this talk separates notions of pleasure from sex. The two parents, two teachers and two therapists agreed in their talk about childhood as ignorant of sexual pleasure, and that children's experience of pleasure does not normally include experience that is sexual. Yet, the idea of childhood innocence holds meanings offering ways to understand children in various conditions of unknowing, immaturity, and as 'protected'/constrained from knowing (Burman, 2008a, 2008b; Kitzinger, 1997). Sexual knowing introduces potential for maturity beyond the child's years, and thereby engaging in sexual actions: actions that rally

parents, teachers and therapists to protect children's innocence. There is a concern about an anhedonic focus within participants' text in their talking about ways to avoid or prevent children experiencing pleasure. Consequently, claims of innocence in childhood can be seen as yet another strategy employed by the technologies of power that keep sexual knowledge of pleasure hidden from children (Bhana, 2016; Robinson, 2013).

Chapter 4 described a history of childhood in which adult sexuality was frequently unhidden from children's everyday lives. Children at various times in their upbringing would witness adult sexual activity, and frequently engage themselves, either with adults or children. The nature and purpose of children's access to adult sexuality has been questioned since the Enlightenment with the rise in development of innocence as a truth of childhood. Through social policy and legal frameworks, children's safety and protection has been shaped to include restricted or denied access to knowledge of sexual pleasure. However, children throughout history have been shown to be curious and active learners of their own bodies, and of themselves in relationship to others. Foucault claims:

Yes, of course, children do have a sexuality, we can't go back to those old notions about children being pure and not knowing what sexuality is.

(1979/1988, p. 7)

But he also acknowledges,

This sexuality of the child is a territory with its own geography that the adult must not enter ... The adult will therefore intervene as guarantor of that specificity of child sexuality in order to protect it. (Foucault,

1978/1990. p. 7)

Discourses that hide sexuality, such as those around health and hygiene, render notions of sexuality in childhood invisible. Categorised as adult behaviour, kissing and masturbation are located within adult descriptions as sites of abnormality and transgression in children's lives.

Kissing and masturbation are two actions explored within the vignettes that may be experienced by children as physically pleasurable. Sexual pleasure can be experienced through many physiological experiences. Talk by Bailey of wet dreams and of boys learning about sex and sexuality through school lessons produced a different power relation within a mother's care when responding to her son's query. She saw wet dreams as feeling relaxed, feeling excited and being happy. Here was evidence of sex power/knowledge less hidden and acknowledgement of sex as pleasure, but practiced discursively with caution: "I don't feel the need to tell them exactly how it happens".

Therapist Maxine's account about the man whose two sons had watched pornography and had engaged in sex acts together was a further example of difference in relations of power. Maxine saw the father's position around "isn't this kind of normal exploratory, you know, curiosity?" contrasting with dominant ideas of 'normative' childhood, heteronormativity and 'normal development' for boys. Maxine's question about what expectations there may be for boys who engage in mutual consenting sex opened a space for different conversations and for different language about children's knowledge of sex and sexual pleasure.

Foucault's (1978/1990) description of pleasure as an avenue through which one comes to knowledge about sex, "in the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself" (p. 57) is found in these participants' talk. Their responses gave accounts of their own narratives about children where ideas of pleasure were

assumed to transgress social and cultural norms. These responses sustain an impression that it is largely the responsibility of women, whether as mothers, teachers, therapists, to protect and educate children. Children's transgressive actions call for containment and policing of the boundaries between what is performed in the private sphere, for example, in the home, and that performed in public, for example, on the school yard. This kind of dualism (according to Derrida), as in between public and private, helps to support or constitute particular discourses about childhood and child sexuality. Within these spaces and the participants' accounts of children's questions and actions within the private sphere there are contradictions about the notion that children cannot safely experience pleasure in their sexuality.

Chapter 9

‘To counter the grips of power’:

Resisting the silence and invisibility of sex talk

This chapter threads together implications from the study. The thread picks up Foucault’s (1978/1990, p. 157) challenge, “It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim...to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance”. The talk of participants in this study appeared to position them within these grips of power, forced to keep the secret of sex. This research contributes to understanding the force relations of power on childhood and child bodies within the performatives of sexuality and gender, and on participants through the force of silence. The ‘possibility of resistance’ is not found within simplistic ideas about power and sexuality. Foucault states:

...we need to consider the possibility that one day, perhaps, in a different economy of bodies and pleasures, people will no longer quite understand how the ruses of sexuality, and the power that sustains its organization, were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex, *so that we became dedicated to the endless task of forcing its secret, of exacting the truest confessions from a shadow*. (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 159; my emphasis)

This chapter revisits and critiques the research design, reviewing limitations of the study, and the research questions that guided the design of this study. Second, it condenses the findings, discussing the analysis that emerged from selections of participants’ talk from the interview transcripts. Third, it concludes with

implications of this research for parents, teachers and counsellors in countering ‘the grips of power’ in child sexuality discourses.

9.1 Reflections on the research design

This research is located in postmodern approaches and social constructionist theory that questions views of knowledge as certain and fixed. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 provided a theoretical approach to explore in the literature the discursive formations of sexuality (in Chapter 3) and of childhood (in Chapter 4). Through poststructuralist and feminist analyses and queer theorising of power/knowledge and gender, this research focused on language, in particular participants’ talk, as discursive practices of power relations within sexuality and gender discourses related to ‘the child’. My selected research methods (described in Chapter 5) included inquiry approaches that supported this exploration of child sexuality discourses. The use of vignettes contributed to a range of responses in which participants talked, not only about their thinking about the scenarios, but many shared personal stories that contributed to the material used for analysis in the findings. Using both individual and group interviews offered a range of possibilities for further inquiry with individual participants among vital discussions with group participants.

My historical professional interest as a counsellor, and now as a counsellor educator, I was positioned in this study subjectively as a researcher of discourse, of text and talk. It was not always straightforward in this discursive study to transition and negotiate deconstructive ways of speaking and thinking that are located within practices of narrative counselling and then to take up the

deconstructive practices of a discourse researcher. Prior to discussing the research questions, I present areas of challenge and limitation in this study.

Challenges and limitations

Particular challenges in this project included the inability to involve children as participants, and the small number of men who participated. A further challenge was the large volume of material from the twenty transcripts resulting from the interviews and groups.

The absence of children from this study is a limitation. Children's perspectives would potentially bring other views not included in the talk of adults. This would have responded to the calls in the literature to actively include children as participants in research involving them. Egan and Hawkes (2008) particularly note inclusivity:

...something missing from most discourses on childhood sexuality are the voices of children themselves. Given the lack of materials from children ... critical interrogation into the history of childhood sexuality translates most often into the history of adult perceptions about the sexuality of children and their attempts to manage it. (Egan & Hawkes, 2008, p. 360)

Only three of the 28 participants who participated in the study were men; one in the teacher's group, another in the parent's group, and Chris who was recruited as a beginning teacher. He also identified as a parent. Male voices are subsequently thin in this project, and the responsibility for care and education of children comes through as predominantly the work of women.

There was substantial material available for analysis within the twenty transcripts from the seventeen individual and three group interviews. Given the quantity of material generated within these interviews, the numbers of group or individual interviews could have been decreased. Analysis of these twenty transcripts generated a varied range of participants' talk to select, related to the discourses identified in the literature and in response to the research questions.

Lastly, a limitation in the design was the wording applied to the fourth vignette. The use of euphemistic language in describing the young girl's action, as 'rubbing between her legs', was partly for ethical reasons and in consideration of the people being invited to participate in the study. A clearer wording might have been 'rubbing on the crotch area'. In this description, participants might have had more direct language and understanding of the potential for this to refer to masturbation, or at least the child touching their genitals. Notwithstanding this limit, its effects for the purpose of the study was minimal. I acknowledge that this could have been more clearly described for such a discursive study.

Reflections on the research questions

The research questions presented at the end of Chapter 4 guided the methods of inquiry and the selection of material for the analysis of the findings. Shaped by an archaeological approach to reviewing literature on the theorising of discursive formations of sexuality/gender and of childhood, the research questions (see p. 145) supported a genealogical study of participants' talk.

The review of literature included Foucault's (1978/1990) understanding of sexuality as a site for the transmission and production of power, which included child masturbation as one particular struggle. Parental surveillance in the family

and home was presented as a biopolitical strategy of governing the child's body amongst other strategies employed within medical and biological discourses. This was taken also into health and education contexts. Deterministic notions of sex and gender, constructed through scientific medical and biological power/knowledge as 'natural' and 'developmental', formed normative understandings of childhood. Literature reviewed indicated that children were classified, divided and subjectified as normal or abnormal, according to scientific criteria, and this objectification included behaviour as heteronormatively gendered, female or male. Child sexuality was governed through the effects of biopower, governing the child's sexual power-knowledge-experience.

Five contemporary discourses on child sexuality that had emerged from the literature in Chapter 4 (see section 4.2). These discourses were: innocence; risk protection; parental responsibility; education; and children's rights. Each of these contemporary discourses were identified within participants' talk and emerged as reiterative performatives of language on sexuality and gender in childhood. In particular, the main discourses found within this study relate to mothers in particular, and how they are positioned within each of the five discourses noted above. Within the findings, mothers and female teachers talked about their thinking and their experiences of supporting children as innocent and safe, and of ways to respond to a child's enquiry about sex and sexuality using language that was partially truthful and honest.

The research questions, designed within the conceptual framework presented, and in light of the literature and these identified contemporary discourses, therefore provided a structure for inquiry that focussed on textual material for the findings and analysis presented. These three chapters highlighted

language that reiterated constructions of innocent and ignorant childhood as identified in the literature, and unpacked the effects of power relations that were deployed in the language of adults and their talk about children and sexuality, notably about sex as reproduction and pleasure.

Significantly, sexuality as gender discourse was indicated within this study in three ways: first, the place of female participants in their talk about children and sexuality; second, the absence of men as participants and of men's talk about child sexuality; third, the majority of examples given by participants about children and sexuality focussed on boys. These three identified areas reiterate and reproduce sexuality in childhood as dominated by male experience but supported socially and culturally within discursive practices by women as mothers, wives and teachers.

9.2 Responsible women and absent men

The review of literature about sexuality as discourse in Chapter 3 (see section 3.5), the research questions (Chapter 4) and the description of discourse analysis (Chapter 5), all refer to specific questions asked by Foucault:

What were the effects of power generated by what was said? What are the links between these discourses, these effects of power, and the pleasures that were invested by them? What knowledge (*savoir*) was formed as a result of this linkage? (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 11)

His three questions serve to focus on how sexuality in childhood has been interrogated as a powerful regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains particular childhood sexuality discourses. Without reiterating this in great detail, what was said in the interviews is clear about the dominant discursive formations

that have been reproduced in this analysis in six ways. First, the overpowering presence of ideas of childhood innocence are based on developmental notions of age and maturity. Second, the assumptions of scientific health, medical and biological discourses determine that sexual knowledge is instinctual and hormonal. Third, the dominance of heteronormative ideas about sex and gender remains. Fourth, age-appropriate education about sex and sexuality should be provided at appropriate developmental stages in childhood utilising appropriate terminology. Fifth, ideally, parents have the right and the opportunity to be first educators of their child about sex and sexuality. Sixth, there are social and cultural norms about boundaries for what is permissible in the private sphere and what is (not) permissible in the public sphere.

What follows presents in more detail the significant conclusions that this research contributes as found in the analysis.

The gendering of adult responsibility for childhood and sexuality

Most participants were women. In the talk about parents and their conversations with children about sexuality, women were primarily featured as engaged with children and responsible for them around sexuality/gender. Women were to be at the fore-front of their children's education about sexuality. Men were conspicuously invisible. This uneven representation of gender in examples, largely of mothers and sons, suggests an area for further questioning and exploration. However, what does the material show for this thesis? It begs the question, where are men in the conversations with children and about children regarding sex and sexuality? Might relations of power be generated through

gendered positions of women as active carers of children and men as silent and passive?

Through two accounts of mothers responding to their son's experiences (Sammie's account of her son's experience with the Minecraft voice over in section 7.1, and Bailey's response to her son's inquiry about wet dreams in section 8.2), and other mothers speaking to their parenting of their children, there was little evidence of men having conversations with sons about sex and sexuality. Sammie discussed the need for a conversation with her husband about the timing of talking with their nine-year-old son about sex and sexuality saying, "but we haven't actually talked about, you know, how were going to approach that subject". That does not mean that men do not have these conversations, but this was not apparent in the talk within this study. The one exception about a man speaking about sex and sexuality, not to his sons, but rather to a therapist, was Maxine's account (in section 8.2) of a father who had come to therapy with his two sons, who had been referred for their sexual behaviour. Maxine's account suggested that, for this man, it may have been the confessional therapeutic context and accountability of the therapeutic space that provided a safe opportunity to speak his own experience of sex as a boy, and as a father now reflecting on his understanding of what he viewed as then normal and exploratory for boys and for his sons. How men approach this subject and what language they employ is not known through this project. Yet, what is found is that men and fathers (apart from Chris in section 8.2) do not feature strongly in this talk, and that talk focussed predominantly on policy and boundaries.

Patterns of speech acts can function to hide children's knowledge of human reproduction, euphemistically referred to by some participants within a

gardening metaphor of seed planting (see Chapter 7). Citational chains were also used to hide knowledge of sexuality from children that adults might attribute with sexual meaning, such as an example of the way a boy dances ('he had no idea that [dance] had sexual connotations', see Chapter 8). Within Chapter 6, examples of participants' talk reinforced sexuality as aged and gendered in children's lives. Significantly, at the same time, participants' talk appears to have also produced a gendered sexuality for them, since they were all women.

Furthermore, the literature that focusses on childhood sexuality is produced mainly by women researchers and not by men. Without making a simplistic claim, apart from Foucault, and a number of authors located within historical and medical research, the literature is dominated by women authors within disciplines of feminism, anthropology, sociology and therapy. This highlights what appears to be a gendering of responsibility towards women to provide the parental care and academic research around childhood and sexuality. The paucity of male researchers in this area mimics the disengagement of men from the teaching profession which was noted in the Prologue.

Struggles and silences: Where and how to speak sexuality

Participants struggled in the interviews to find language to speak about sexuality in childhood, and the spaces to safely engage in speaking. S. Jackson previously mentioned this silence.

It is now *the* secret which we conceal from children, and is defined as such by the fact of our keeping it from them. As such it serves as a continual compulsion to produce an ever increasing volume of words. (S. Jackson, 1990, p. 48)

The use of silence as a strategy with children

S. Jackson's words alert to the repression of secrecy in society and in the family around sexuality, positioning parents, in particular, as morally and socially responsible for holding this secret. Foucault also writes about hidden knowledge and the slow surfacing of confidential statements. Hiding knowledge of sexual reproduction from children occurred through participants' text, as can be seen in the following examples:

- Through censorship, that information about sexual intercourse is not ok for children and discussion about erect penises is not ok, even in humour (see Chapter 7, section 7.1).
- Through euphemistic speaking about how "babies are made", such as 'the seed story', although parents speak about using the correct terminology (meaning names of genitals) but not telling exactly what goes on – which could be described as not using the correct terminology (meaning sexual intercourse). This is a partial telling (see Chapter 7, section 7.1).
- Through ideas of what knowledge is shared and how and where and who by: private/public, old school/new school, taboo/spoken, and Puritanical Christian morality (see through all the findings chapters, especially in sections 6.2, 7.2 and 8.2)
- Through fear of children acting on the information they received, and going out and "doing it" (see particularly in Chapter 7)

Through silence and obscuring this knowledge of sex, the question arises about what might children do with partial knowledge? Where there are gaps to knowing, e.g., how might children take up an agentic learner position in seeking what is

hidden? While age, stage and risk protection were conveyed as reasons not to tell, how might adults be aware of child-led inquiry into notions of the right time?

A significant finding here is that parents talked about wanting to teach their child(ren) first about sexuality and sex education, information and knowledge. They did not want their child to learn from the internet or peers at school. They positioned themselves as wanting to respond to their child's initial sexual interest. The talk produced by participants however located their thinking within discursive practices that favoured partial information shared with children. Practices of deferral and obfuscation, of silence and a focus on technical terminology, had participants speaking about themselves as being open and honest, and wanting to tell the truth. Within their speaking, parents also position themselves with care and caution for their children and a sense of significance about what sexual/sexuality knowledge might have for children.

Parents also voiced their concern about other children, that is, other than their own. Such concerns included children who held information about sex/sexuality and who then shared with their peers. Responses ranged from a fear for the effects of what such sharing might have for their own children, and about the sources of the information for those other children.

Silence as a discursive strategy with adults

Chapters 7 and 8 examined findings from participant interview data that exposed discursive practices of parenting and teaching related to holding information and knowledge around sexuality from children, and the ways that adults regulate children's sexuality through what is spoken and unsaid. Specifically, knowledges of reproduction and pleasure have been constructed in

ways that exclude children, and construct childhood as unknowing. Chris, the newly qualified teacher (in Chapter 8), focussed on school policy as providing boundaries for children in their relationships to one another. The same policy imposed regulatory practices on teachers, producing silence about the practice of kissing at school. A knowing child is transgressive, and one who is abnormal. Teachers and parents are subjected to normative practices, speaking to ideas on children's sexuality that hold a respectable acceptance within social and cultural norms or silent to ideas that might transgress the norm. Regulated within developmental discourse, these discursive practices employ *disciplinary techniques with regulative methods* that hide truths, and create social contexts for tangled understandings of age and appropriateness for children's knowing of sex. Repressive technologies of shame and discomfort are engaged to police the boundaries of what is appropriate between private and public spheres. Frequently, these boundaries draw upon the notion of childhood innocence and vulnerability as cause for protecting children.

Bailey, a parent of one boy and three girls (in section 8.2), talked about telling her children what she considered to be truthful and honest information about sex related to genitals and pleasure. A number of participants also talked about being open and honest, but also felt the need not to tell children "exactly how it happens". Bailey talked about confusion, but for other participants there were experiences of not having the language to speak about sexuality or the comfort to speak. There was a scarcity of safe spaces to speak about sexuality and childhood, and an absence of language of how to speak sexuality with children. Pleasures associated with kissing, masturbation and nudity drew mixed responses from participants. For most participants, that these actions occurred was itself

concerning. For most, the context or setting in which these actions occurred provided some mitigation of concern, such as whether this was in the privacy of the family home or the public area of school. Particular explanatory moments from the findings were:

- Kissing and masturbation were located by some as health and hygiene issues, thereby hiding sexuality and pleasure in the discursive language of medicine and health (see Chapter 8, section 8.1).
- Nudity was located as “being a clown” or clowning around, and could be associated to ideas of ‘mooning’ – which has a gendered interpretation for boys and young men of being silly, it is a knowledgeable inappropriateness (see Chapter 8, section 8.2).
- Ideas of pleasure for boys and their actions to experience pleasure are frequently viewed in a context of sexual abuse. From this perspective, children can be viewed as damaged and dirty, so that sexuality is viewed as dirty and sexual actions as harmful (see Chapter 8, section 8.2).

Pleasure is unspoken in these examples but acknowledged through talk of fondness, talking about, “at that age – they wouldn’t have sexual feelings – they wouldn’t do that for enjoyment, would they?”, and of “he’s just being silly”.

Knowledge of sex is hidden, as is pleasure; hidden within discourses that assumes children cannot experience physical sexual pleasure outside of abuse. Childhood as a state of human development has been constructed as devoid of sexual pleasure. However, where sexual pleasure is known to a child then adults assume that there has been abuse.

Town (1999) identifies particular ‘silences’ about sexuality at school as a key heteronormative practice that maintains and represents hegemonic

masculinities in school. Blaise (2010) identifies two specific silences in her research with young children: same-gender desire and non-normative gender behaviours. This, she states, “indicates that children know a lot about heterosexuality and romance, and about how femininities and masculinities are constructed through relationships, as well as how desire plays a part in constructing normative understandings of sexuality” (Blaise, 2010, p. 7). Foucault’s (1978/1990) “general and studied silence” (p. 4) notes the repression of talking about children’s sexuality, claiming that “the pedagogical institution has imposed a ponderous silence on the sex of children” (p. 29). These ‘silences’ are linked, since they both sustain ideas of ‘children having no sex’ (Foucault, 1978/1990) and the dominance of heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity (Town, 1999).

Lastly, there were a number of accounts in the data where participants were silenced within discursive positions to speak sex with children. Parents might speak in euphemistic language and employ strategies that delayed telling about sex. This silencing of sex, of sex talk and of sharing information about reproductive and pleasurable sexualities with children, is an effect of biopower. The governance of childhood in terms of sex knowledge, and of “a good normative adult citizen-subject” (Robinson, 2013, p. 6), has produced silencing of parents. Foucault considers the force of silence that has developed within Western societies since the 17th century:

Silence itself – the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with

them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (Foucault, 1990a, p. 27)

Many parents interviewed were unclear what to say, when to say it, and how to speak. Furthermore, there is uncertainty, and perhaps fear for possible response by peers and authorities, about safe places to speak and safe people to talk to. This research offered spaces for participants to speak, but with some guarded speaking. Biopolitics regulates what is appropriate knowledge for children and appropriate actions/behaviour. Biopolitics therefore also regulates adults' views of what is appropriate, and possibly had effects for parents how much and how little to speak in interviews.

9.3 In conclusion

Within the last 20 years there has been a growing academic interest in childhood sexuality (see Chapter 4). Research and writing has been produced in a range of academic disciplines, namely anthropology (Frayser, 1994, 2003), sociology (Bancroft, 2003; Hawkes & Egan, 2008b; Robinson, 2013), psychology (Friedrich, et al., 1991, 1992, 1998, 2001, Jackson, 1982) and history (Egan & Hawkes, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Jackson, 1990). Blaise (2005, 2009) focuses on gender within the early childhood education sector. Apart from

academic sources, there are a range of media articles about childhood and sexuality, usually taking up a sensational aspect and positioning children as abused, as victims and/or perpetrators (see, for example, Boynes, 2004; Kirshenbaum, 2015). Lastly, there are some pieces within parenting magazines, which often present an opinion using citational chains about play, exploration and experimentation. Ideas of *public talk* on child sexuality has been largely within academic, or news and magazine media settings.

Some participants in this study remarked on the research giving them a space for “private talk” to explore and discuss an area largely not discussed elsewhere, or in public. For Jayne (see section 6.2) it provided an opportunity to explore thinking about gender; for the teachers’ group, an opportunity for them to talk together; and for the therapists’ group, an opportunity to speak differently about this apart from clinical and interventionist conversation regularly had. Without this research project, would silence have been the norm for these participants? Where do teachers and counsellors, as professional practitioners, find further space(s) to engage in conversations where they feel safe? This study, therefore, as a study of disciplinary power within discourses around child sexual knowledge, exposes the tactics of developmental and biological determinism, gender and bio-politics.

Ideas for further research to counter the grips of power

I don’t construct my analyses in order to say, “This is the way things are, you are trapped.” I say these things only insofar as I believe it enables us to transform them. (Foucault, 1978/2002, pp. 294-295)

Analysis of discourses is not about coming to clear and definite conclusions. Rather, as Foucault indicates, awareness allows for the possibility of transformation. This research contributes to thinking about practical support for parents to communicate with their children, and how to connect with teachers and schools (see Conlon, 2019).

Silin's (1995) 'passion for ignorance' and Bhana's (2016) 'price of innocence' question ideas of protection of childhood in the face of AIDS and its effects for children. Each author calls for a realisation that innocence and ignorance are unsafe for children, and that ideas of protecting children must respond to an active and curious childhood even when this appears transgressive. I vividly recall Bailey's talk (Chapter 8) with her son about wet dreams as transgressive of normative discourse about what children should know about sex as pleasure. That discourse includes moral panic that invites fear about children "doing it" when they have access to information. I also recall what Maxine the therapist shared, in Chapter 8, about the father of boys who had engaged in penetrative anal sex. Maxine had spoken about the father speaking about his own understanding that boys do explore sexually, and in their curiosity, might engage in same-sex behaviour. Is it possible that experimentation for some children might focus on going beyond the norms rather than practising them? The father recounted his own memories about some of what he did with his friends.

For adults, the possible fear of the gaze of peers (spouses, colleagues, family), and the policing of self and in contexts of parental responsibility, teacher profession, and dominant social norms, may contribute to the silence of some adults, particularly men. This research has raised questions about what spaces might be available for parents and teachers to speak into, and where might it be

safe for men to speak about sex and sexuality of children. Not only is space a question, but also the availability of language; how to speak and what to speak. Participants seemed to struggle in this talk, including, at times, the researcher. Gender discourses, in particular, engaged and engage relations of power that bring about silence and struggling talk.

Renold's (2005) identification in her research about the possibilities for learning *from* children, and of children learning from each other, adds to the call for further research in this area. Renold's comment is directed to educational practitioners and professionals. This research reflects her challenge to those who "need to disrupt their own normalised assumptions about what constitutes 'age-appropriate', 'gender-appropriate' and 'sexually-appropriate' knowledge and behaviour" (Renold, 2005, p. 178). In particular, this study opens further possibilities for future research that could examine these following areas.

Research on child sexuality with children as active participants in studies, to explore how children experience positioning within sexuality and gender discourses.

Child sexuality research with men, and specifically explore how men are positioned as partners, fathers, teachers to speak about child sexuality and gender within the contemporary political climate which can view men as potentially dangerous.

Child sexuality research with teachers, understanding the contradictory discourses in which they are located with children, parents, colleagues, management and governance.

Spaces for dialogue about sexuality and gender in childhood could be researched, given that many of the participants in this study commented that they

do not have available spaces to speak. Many found the interview a site for safe speaking and an opportunity for professional conversations. These spaces may need to be explored for children, for men, for parents and for teachers.

Possible implications of this research

As a postmodern project, I provide no definitive claims but the findings that have emerged from my analysis in this study. Therefore, possible implications of this discursive research are presented as a series of questions. Like Derrida's metaphor of deconstruction as a dredging machine, readers may collect ideas and "while random particles are picked up, something is dropped, something remains, and something cannot be scooped up in the first place" (Wolfreys, 1998, p. 15).

For schools and for teachers and parents

Educational centres, such as schools and early childhood settings, have been shown to be locations where young boys learn to be heterosexual men (see Chapter 3; Davies, 1993; Taylor, 2013b). This heteronormative learning occurs within particular silences (Blaise, 2010; Town, 1999). Participants explored their own understandings of child sexuality and gender within the interviews, many struggling to find a language to speak, and some expressing an uncertainty that concerned them. Considering that educational centres have students from varied cultures and communities, this research can offer questions about policies and practices related to perspectives on sexuality. What opportunities are there for teachers to engage in professional development around understanding child sexuality, and responding to events in school related to gender and sexuality? Teachers and parents may have different cultural and social understandings of childhood and sexuality. What opportunities are there for teachers and parents to

meet together and speak about these? Are there opportunities for parents to enquire and speak to others about their ideas and questions regarding child sexual development? Are there spaces for men, teachers and parents, to feel safe to speak about child sexuality?

For initial teacher education

There were three beginning teachers interviewed in this study. They each identified this area as something new for them to consider, and they wondered what teacher education could provide for new teachers. Relying particularly on the governance of school policy, how might beginning teachers be prepared to explore ideas and practices related to gender and childhood sexuality?

For therapists working with children and families

What opportunities are there for counsellors/therapists to examine their practice regarding the ideas they hold and the questions they might ask when counselling children, families, and parents about sex and sexuality and gender? How well placed are counsellors to support children, and their teachers and parents, within their school and learning settings?

Research could be planned and implemented to explore further these complex questions. While I find it disappointing and difficult to suggest, I think that research with children may benefit from the inclusion of women researchers, given the social and cultural attitudes to men working with young children, both in terms of a possible education setting for research, and because of panics that can occur regarding men and fear of potential sexual abuse.

Coda

Foucault's concepts developed and used in this thesis, supported further by researchers who draw upon Foucault's thinking, have provided a rich and varied framework through which to explore the concept of childhood sexuality. This discursive project has examined historical and cultural knowledges about childhood and sexuality discourses that act on children, parents, teachers and counsellors within families, schools and communities. The forces of power in talk and in silence construct *childhood*, *sexuality*, and *gender* in many and in particular ways. These forces also have power effects for me in my multiple subjectivities. This research does not provide definitive answers and did not intend to. However, it has produced a series of explorations and questions that contribute significantly to understandings of sexuality in childhood. This research has specifically contributed to my teaching and research supervision through grappling with the questions that a feminist poststructuralist analysis demands on power/knowledge, and the deconstructive attention to the slipperiness of language and meaning. Teachers and counsellors involved with young children may find this study useful for exploring and expanding their own professional knowledges, and reflecting on how language has effects in relations of power in their work with children, families and colleagues. Finally, some parents could also find the ideas explored in this thesis helpful to think about the ways that they are positioned within many subjectivities.

The manifold sexualities – those which appear with the different ages (sexualities of the infant or the child)...those which, in a diffuse manner, invest relationships (the sexuality of...teacher and student...)...those

which haunt spaces (the sexuality of the home, the school...) – all form the correlate of exact procedures of power. (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 47)

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Appendices

Appendix A: Vignettes

Appendix B: Information Sheet (Teachers and Counsellors)

Appendix C: Consent form (Teachers' Group)

Appendix D: Approval letter from the Ethics Committee

Appendix E: Sexuality education content in the curriculum

Appendix A: Vignettes

1. Mark is five years old; it is his first day at school. He has been excited for some time about coming to school. The teacher on duty at lunchtime notices that he goes to the other side of the playground and there he urinates in full view of the children playing there.

2. Deidre and Frank are both eight years old. Their classroom teacher sees them playing together in their classroom, and then again notices them playing together outside. During their morning playtime, Deidre was seen by her teacher kissing Frank on the lips.

[pause for discussion]

The teacher asked Deidre's parents to come to a meeting with the principal. The principal told her parents that Deidre's behaviour was not 'normal' and could possibly lead to 'more serious sexual offending' as she gets older. The parents were told that Deidre would be suspended, while the school considered its response.

3. Oliver is a 5-year-old boy who has been at school several months. He usually plays with the other boys at lunchtime on the playground. On this particular day, after lunch in the classroom, he pulls his pants down in front of the teacher and his classmates. He is smiling while he does this.

[pause for discussion]

Earlier, while Oliver was playing a ball game with other boys on the playground another boy had pulled Oliver's trousers down, showing his underwear. Boys and girls in the area laughed. Oliver laughed as well.

4. Jacqui, a 5-year-old girl uses one hand to rub herself between her legs, through her clothing. She does this almost every day at school, usually when she is lining up - either in the classroom or out in the playground.

5. Quentin is a 9-year-old boy who goes to a rural school where there are children who are both older and younger in his classroom. In the toilet one day, he comes up behind another boy from his class, and puts his arms around his hips – touching the other boy’s penis.

[pause for discussion]

The principal expelled Quentin from the school—he was no longer enrolled. When Quentin went to enrol at another school, he was turned down. Quentin’s parents heard from a parent-friend that a teacher had referred to him as a “sex offender”.

6. Stephen, a 7-year-old boy is overheard by the class teacher while he was talking to Lucy, aged 6, in the playground. They were sitting by the sand pit, when he said to Lucy, “...and that is when I put my penis in your vagina”.

[pause for discussion]

The teacher was uncertain what to do – she then asked them if they were going to play in the sandpit or perhaps join other classmates on the field. The teacher then phoned Stephen’s parents to talk about what she had heard.

[pause for discussion]

Stephen’s mother has recently given birth, and Stephen had been curious about where babies come from, how they are made. His mother said she believed in being honest with children, and would answer their questions openly and honestly. When she said that there was a baby growing in her tummy, Stephen was inquisitive, and not satisfied when told that “Daddy plants a seed that grows in Mummy’s tummy”.

Appendix B: Information Sheet (Teachers and Counsellors example)

Staff Information Sheet (15 May 2013)

Title: **What stories are currently being told about children's sexuality in New Zealand?**
Researching children's and adults' perceptions of sexuality in childhood.

Who am I?

My name is Paul Flanagan. I am a counsellor who has worked with children and families. I now teach counselling at the University of Waikato, in the Master of Counselling and Post Graduate Certificate in Family and Relationship Counselling. Much of my work over the last 15 years has been with families where children have acted in sexual ways. Parents and teachers have raised concerns about sexual activity. At times sexual activity has been understood as abusive, and other times as playful and exploratory. Often children have received the attention of school (e.g., RTLB) and/or social service authorities (e.g., Child Youth & Family). This can sometimes have effects for families, including feelings of shame and isolation, stress and uncertainty, among others.

Purpose of research:

I am interested in gaining a range of understandings of what is currently being said and thought about children's sexuality, including how teachers, parents and children understand and perceive sexuality and sexual activity. The current research literature is mostly from the northern hemisphere. It largely comes from *observational studies* (by adults) about what adults have seen of children's behaviour, as well as *retrospective studies* where adults have been asked to recall their own childhood experiences and behaviour. I am planning a specific New Zealand study, using *narrative inquiry* which asks people to tell stories: these stories reflect truthful accounts of experience and understanding, rather than historical and scientific facts about events.

Children have often been understood by adults from two contradictory perspectives:

- As innocent and ignorant in the process of 'becoming' more developed human beings as they grow into adulthood. This perspective holds children as passive recipients in the world, with a sense of immaturity and naivety. Sometimes known as 'natural' childhood, where children are expected to be non-sexual. Anything that interrupts this perspective is viewed as potentially abusive or 'robbing' of childhood innocence.
- An alternative perspective is of children as active agents, actively participating and exploring their worlds. Within this concept children engage in learning about themselves and each other through action.

Children's actions are frequently described according to adults' understandings. Sometimes, children's intentions and understandings are not considered or invited. This can result in

disciplinary action at school, referral to social services (social worker, psychologist, counsellor), and potentially disruptive actions such as placement outside of the home. There are times when extreme responses are warranted. However, my concern is that sometimes children are judged by adult ideas of sexuality – and that there is need for research into what children’s ideas of sexuality and sexual actions might mean to them.

I propose to include a range of narratives from adults of their perceptions of children’s sexuality and sexual activity, but importantly to ask children themselves what stories are being told about children’s sexuality and sexual activity. This voice of children is critical to inform parents and professionals about understandings of children’s experience. It is not intended to ask children directly about their own experience, but to ask what stories they know about. This narrative approach allows for children to tell about knowledges they share without the potential for feeling they are being interviewed about their own behaviour. The adults included will be a range of parents, teachers and counsellors who have stories to share on the perspectives of children’s sexuality and sexual activity.

The research project aims to include interviews with teachers, parents and children (Years 5-8) from a school, and interviews with counsellors, parents and children (ages 9-12) from a therapeutic programme for children and families.

Aims of research:

To gain understanding of children’s sexuality and sexual activity in New Zealand.

To help parents, teachers and counsellors in their own understandings and responses.

To explore the possibility of children’s understandings which may differ from adults’, and subsequently inform adult understandings

To open space for children’s voices about sexuality and sexual activity

What am I asking of you?

I ask that you read this Information Sheet and ask any questions you have about this research. You are then invited to consider participating in this research project, as either/both

- participants in a focus group (of up to 6 participants), and / or
- a participant in individual interviews.

The topic for conversation in both the focus group and individual interviews will be, “What stories are currently being told about children’s sexuality and sexual activity?” Initially responding to vignettes, these interviews are not asking you to tell specific stories about children you work with, but to elicit ideas and thinking that contribute to how children’s sexuality is spoken of and understood – whether in your current work context or elsewhere.

What will happen to your information?

If you agree to participate I will ask you to sign a consent form to state that you have understood the purpose of this research, had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate. The consent form will also acknowledge that you understand that the interviews will be audio recorded, and transcribed. The transcription of your individual interview, and/or a summary of ideas from the focus group, will be offered to participants for review and comment. These will then be used by me for analysis – this involves an exploration of the ‘discourses’ that shape the ideas and practices that your stories tell. This material will be used for my PhD thesis, and possibly for subsequent presentations (e.g., at conferences and seminars) as well as publications.

You have the right to choose not to participate, and you have the right to withdraw after agreeing to participate. Your identity will not be disclosed, nor will the identity of your work place - your identity will be given a name different from your own. In re-telling any story or quotation of your words I will take care to remove any identifying information. You can withdraw your contribution from this research up until the time the transcripts are used for analysis (date to be inserted). After this date it will not be possible to withdraw your contribution.

Who can you talk to about this research project?

If you have any questions or concerns relating to this project I ask that you to speak with me. If you want to talk to someone else, or possibly comment about how I conduct this research, you are welcome to contact either of my academic supervisors:

Supervisors:

This research project is supervised by

Associate Professor **Lise Claiborne**, and Associate Professor **Sally Peters**

Tel: 07 838 4466 ext. 4901

Tel: 07 838 4466 ext. 8386

Email: l.claiborne@waikato.ac.nz

Email: speters@waikato.ac.nz

Department of Human Development & Counselling,

University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

If you would like to contact me about participating, asking questions or seeking clarification, please **Email** paulf@waikato.ac.nz or **Phone 07 838 4466 ext 7728**

Paul Flanagan

Appendix C: Consent form (Teachers' Group example)

School Staff Consent form – Focus group

I have read the Staff Information Sheet for Paul Flanagan's PhD research titled: *What stories are currently being told about children's sexuality in New Zealand?* dated **15 May 2013**.

I know that I have the right to decline participation in this study

I understand that the principal and Board of Trustees have agreed to this research occurring in our school. I know that there is no expectation for me to participate.

I understand:

- That confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the group process, and that in the writing up of any contributions my words or stories could be identified by other group participants, but my identity will not be disclosed
- That I am asked to respect with confidence the identities of the group participants
- That the identity of our school will not be disclosed, and while I might talk to others about my participation in this study I am asked to keep this in confidence outside of the school

I agree to participate in this study, and I **consent** to the following:

- *To participate in a **focus group** of up to 6 parents in which the discussion will invite me to respond to and share stories of children's sexuality and sexual activity, with questions to inquire of my understandings about these stories. This will be for approximately 60-90 minutes.*
- *To have the interviews recorded and transcribed*
- *To have the content of the interviews used for analysis as part of Paul Flanagan's PhD study*
- *To have electronic digital audio files kept in a locked secure place, along with written transcripts, for at least five (5) years after completion of this PhD study.*
- *To have the content of the interviews used for subsequent presentations at conferences and seminars, and for written works, such as publications of articles, book chapters, and books*

I am willing to be contacted by Paul Flanagan for further interview if there is anything that surfaces in the interview transcript that he would like further clarification or understanding

YES /NO

I would like to receive a copy of Paul's summary of ideas to review/comment

YES / NO

I would like to be informed about the progress of this research YES / NO

And would like this information YEARLY / ON COMPLETION by POST / EMAIL / PRESENTATION

Name:..... Date:

Phone:

Email Address:

Signature.....

Postal:

Appendix D: Approval letter from the Ethics Committee

MEMO

To	Paul Flanagan	From	FOE Research Ethics Committee
CC	Associate Professor Lise Claiborne	Date	4 February 2011
Subject	Supervised Postgraduate Research –Ethical Approval FOE113/10		

▼ Paul,

Thank you for submitting the amendments to your research proposal:

**(De)Constructions of childhood sexuality, normality and therapy: A narrative
critique
of ideas and practices in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context**

I am pleased to advise that your application has received ethical approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Associate Professor Linda Mitchell

Chairperson

Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Appendix E: Sexuality Education content in the curriculum at Primary and Intermediate levels

Sexuality education content at different levels of the curriculum

The levels here are a guide. Decisions will be informed by student needs and school goals.

Level	Sexuality education content
Junior primary (years 1–3)	<p>At these levels, sexuality education will focus on learning about growth, development, the human body, friendships, and family relationships. Students will describe changes in growth and identify body parts and developmental needs. Students will discuss family relationships and affirm and show respect for diverse family structures. Gender stereotypes and norms will be questioned and discussed, and students will take action to support the well-being of others and learn friendship skills. Students will learn about basic human rights in relation to relationships and identity. Students will learn to express feelings and how they contribute to positive and inclusive environments.</p> <p><i>It is recommended that discussions about identity, personal health, body parts, and families are woven into learning throughout the year and that appropriate and diverse resources are used to engage students in discussions.</i></p>
Middle and upper primary (years 4–6)	<p>At these levels, students will learn about pubertal change and body growth and development. This may include human reproduction. They will learn how to support themselves and others during change and develop a positive body image. They will describe how social messages and stereotypes about relationships, sexuality, and gender affect well-being, and will actively affirm the rights of themselves and others. They will reflect on friendships and plan strategies for positive and supportive relationships. They will identify risks and issues in online and social media environments and question messages related to gender, sexuality, and diversity. They will identify how to access health care.</p> <p><i>It is recommended that specific time is dedicated to learning about sexuality.</i></p>
Intermediate (years 7–8)	<p>At these levels, students will learn how to support themselves and others during pubertal change and develop a positive body image. Intimate relationships and sexual attraction will be discussed and</p>

	<p>respect and communication skills highlighted. Processes of conception and child birth will be included and students will identify health care resources in the community. Students will critically explore how</p> <p>gender and sexuality messages affect well-being and plan strategies to support inclusion, diversity, and respect in friendships and relationships (including in online environments). Students will analyse how sexuality is represented in social media and mass media, and critique dominant messages. Students will develop assertiveness skills and recognise instances of bullying and discrimination and question and discuss gender norms.</p> <p><i>The Education Review Office has identified that schools with effective programmes spend at least 12–15 hours per year on sexuality education (ERO, 2007b).</i></p>

(Ministry of Education, n.d.).